Gig Work in Scotland: An Exploratory Study of Job Quality Among Gig Workers in Central Scotland

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Abstract

Current views of gig work and the implications of these modern employment practices for workers and wider society are largely polarized. However, current presumptions regarding the quality of gig work have been mainly speculative and are not embedded within the experiences of workers (Kalleberg & Dunn, 2017). This study contributes to a growing body of literature regarding job quality and gig work through the exploration of individuals' perceptions and experiences of working in the gig economy.

Face to face interviews were conducted with 32 gig workers (varying from 35-90 minutes) located in Central Scotland, working via digital app-based platforms, and doing work related to hospitality, courier and taxi driving. A number of key findings emerge from the study. First, despite lacking a number of characteristics traditionally associated with 'good work' it was found in the study that gig work is not unequivocally bad with evidence provided of positive aspects of gig work including, for example, regarding flexibility and enjoyment. In addition, it was found that the extent to which gig work represented a good or a bad job was influenced not only by the conditions of employment, but also by individual circumstance including the extent to which income from gig work provided a primary or supplementary source of income. The study also contributes to wider debates concerning the impact of disruptive technology on the future of work revealing both positive and negative impacts of platform technology on the quality of work experience including in regards to key components of job quality such as autonomy, flexibility and the social working environment. The implications of these findings for those seeking to improve the quality of gig jobs, as well for future research, are also considered.

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Research Thesis Submission

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Chapter 1 – Introduction and Overview of the Thesis

1.0 Introduction

The following chapter provides a general introduction to the research topic explored within this thesis. The chapter begins with a brief overview of the broader context within which the study is situated and the rationale for investigation before stating explicitly the aims and objectives of the study. Following on from this, a brief summary is provided of the research methods employed in order to achieve the aims and objectives outlined and an overview is provided of the overall structure of the thesis.

1.1 Background

The nature of the rapidly evolving, global business environment has resulted in a dramatic shift in the way in which organisations manage their human resource (Cooper & Burke, 2002). Since the early 1970s paid work is said to have undergone a period of transformation as organisations have experienced globalisation, computerisation, restructuring and downsizing (Williams, et al., 2012; Kalleberg, 2000). Work as a defined set of narrow tasks performed under the direction and control of a single employer on a perpetual basis, utilising equipment provided by the employer within a fixed location, is becoming an increasingly outdated notion (Stanford, 2017). As organisations and governments adapt to growing levels of international competition and economic uncertainty, emphasis is placed upon reducing 'red tape' for business and 'optimizing' the workforce (Brooks, et al., 2004). This focus on labour market efficiency and 'firm flexibility' has seen a departure from the traditional employment relationship and the standard model of full-time, regular employment with a single employer over the long term, as employers back away from long term employment norms in favour of new 'flexible' working arrangements (Hacker, 2006). To this end, non-standard or atypical forms of employment have increasingly become an established feature of European labour markets, constituting around 25% of the total workforce (European Commission, 2006). In particular, the highly de-regulated labour market in the UK has provided a breeding ground for atypical forms of employment with the UK experiencing the third largest increase in casual workers within the EU, since 2008 (Hudson-Sharp & Runge, 2017).

Whilst the advantage of 'workforce flexibility' for those organisations using temporary staff is well documented (Cappelli & Keller, 2013), the implications for workers appear to be less positive. For example, whilst proponents of these new flexible forms of

employment argue that they serve to encourage labour force participation, increase productivity and improve levels of work-life balance (Lenz, 1996; Whyman & Petrescu, 2014); there are growing concerns about the trade-off between flexibility and job security and the impact of such schemes at the lower end of the income distribution (O'Connor, 2016). To this end, a number of studies have highlighted the often involuntary nature of the 'flexible' working arrangement and the potential social costs of insecure employment, with casual and temporary work arrangements found to contribute to greater levels of social inequality and increasing levels of worker exploitation (Giesecke, 2009; ACAS, 2015). In addition, evidence has been found that well-being conditions for workers in precarious forms of employment are significantly lower than those found in relation to permanent employment with such arrangements commonly associated with low wage rates, a lack of job security, coercive management and intensified labour processes (Aronsson, et al., 2002; Mitlacher, 2008; Bosmans, et al., 2015; Booth, et al., 2002; Bardasi & Francesconi, 2004).

With mounting concerns over the neglect of workers interests as a result of the changing economic and political context and the focus on economic priorities at the expense of employee well-being (Thornley, et al., 2010) recent calls have been made for a revival of research concerned with the quality of work life (Grote & Guest, 2017). The demand for such a revival is furthered by concerns over the broader social impacts of changes in the nature of work and ongoing debates as to the quality of jobs in contemporary society (Findlay, et al., 2013)[1]. Central to this debate is the recent growth in so called 'gig working', an extreme variant of casual work which sees individuals trade their time and skills via digital platforms to provide services to a third party on an ad hoc, task-by-task basis.

1.2 Defining Gig Work and the Rationale for Investigation

Gig work, defined for the purpose of the current study as "platform based employment which uses digital technology to mediate the process of commissioning, supervising, delivery and compensating work performed by workers on a contingent, piece-work basis" (Flanagan, 2017, p. 2), represents a form of work organisation which has accelerated rapidly in the last decade and has, more recently, attracted high levels of media attention becoming associated with technological advancements and, in particular,

[1] For a full discussion of changes in the nature of work and the debate over the quality of jobs in contemporary society, see Chapter 1.

the development of the Smart phone. Indeed whilst 'gigging' is by no means new, traditionally being associated with a single performance by a musician or band, the growth in mobile digital technology has enabled the development of online platforms which facilitate the matching of supply and demand across a range of sectors (Broughton, et al., 2018). Within the gig economy, individuals are generally engaged on a task-by-task basis to perform personal service work for the consumers of a digital platform, for which they receive a percentage of the fee from the platform operator. Those performing gig work will usually be classified as independent or casual workers with the gig companies, or platform owners, operating as intermediaries, providing an online or application based platform through which service providers are able to connect and transact with service users (Donovan, et al., 2016). Whilst task based work or 'gigs' can be said to apply to range of different functions across a number of different industries making the concept itself somewhat imprecise, gig work typically involves 'lower skilled' service provision, including, for example, food delivery and transport services (Goulden, et al., 2018).

Over the last five years the UK gig economy has expanded rapidly with approximately five million workers now engaged in gig work, approaching the number of workers employed in the public sector (CMI, 2016; Goulden, et al., 2018). Indeed, research undertaken by the Trade Unions Congress found that the number of individuals working in the gig economy at least once a week has doubled from 4.7% in 2016 to 9.6% in 2019 (TUC, 2019). This growth is expected to continue with some studies projecting a growth in the gross volume of the global gig economy of as much as 123% over five years with the market value for gig economy services rising from $204bn to $455bn (Mastercard & Kaiser Associates, 2019). Some see the gig economy as promoting entrepreneurship and innovation whilst also providing flexibility, autonomy, work-life balance and opportunities for individuals to supplement incomes by monetising their resources (e.g. time, vehicle etc) (Kalleberg & Dunn, 2017). However, gig work has faced a significant backlash within the media being criticised for its contribution to the creation of 'low quality' jobs and the severance of the link between low unemployment and wage levels, from which workers have previously benefited (Edwards, 2017). Indeed, current research has indicated that gig workers share with other forms of non-standard workers, a risk that they will fall outwith the scope of existing employment and social protections (Forde, et al., 2017). As such, the quality of life for those working in the gig economy emerges as an area of concern and one in need of further investigation.

Despite the concerns over the fairness and sustainability of employment conditions within the gig economy, there has been limited investigation into individual experiences and perceptions of gig work. Indeed, current assumptions as to the quality of gig work remain largely speculative and are not embedded within the experiences of individual workers (see for example, Stanford, 2017). The quantity of popular commentary significantly outweighs the evidentiary base with calls for the need to better understand why people work in the gig economy and how trade unions, policy makers and employers should respond (Healy, et al., 2017). What qualitative research does exist conflicts with the largely negative perception of gig work portrayed within the popular media with a large proportion of gig workers indicating that they are working this way out of choice and were, on the whole, satisfied with their working conditions (Broughton, et al., 2018). Whilst this may be the case, research of this kind tends to take gig worker views at face value, and lacks a conceptual framework, which is problematic given the newness of such employment arrangements. In addition, although jobs within the gig economy differ from what have been traditionally considered 'good jobs', the reality of the gig economy is said to be more nuanced, producing both good and bad jobs (Kalleberg & Dunn, 2017). For example, and as is highlighted by Kalleberg and Dunn (2017), jobs within the gig economy differ in relation to such things as; the level of control of the platform operator, the level of wages, the duration of tasks and even the contractual relationship between the parties (some workers are classified as workers whilst others are deemed to be independent contractors). By better understanding the perceived variability in the quality of jobs and the reasons for this variability, a better assessment can be made of the costs and benefit associated with the growth of this new type of working arrangement.

As such, in the context of broader debates about the impact of changes in the nature of work on worker well-being (Grote & Guest, 2017) and with calls for the need to re-examine the concept of 'good work' in the twenty-first century (Healy, et al., 2017), this study seeks to move beyond polarised assessments of gig work as simply good or bad, contributing to a more in-depth and nuanced understanding of gig work and job quality. A more detailed discussion of the aims and objectives of the study are outlined in the following section.

1.3 Research Aims and Objectives

As highlighted above in Section 1.2, the main aim of this study is to provide an in-depth and nuanced examination of job quality in the gig economy by exploring the perceptions and experiences of gig workers whilst recognising that many of these experiences remain

contextually grounded. Through an examination of the lived experience of workers operating through labour-based platforms within Central Scotland, a human perspective on this modern form of work is delineated, providing an important insight into modern employment practices which work well and areas where improvements can be made. In addition to addressing an empirical gap and building knowledge as to what it is like for individuals engaged in gig work, the evidence gained through this research can be used to inform the ongoing debate between policymakers, businesses and trade unions, as to how contemporary employment practices should be regulated in order to maintain and improve job quality. Furthermore, by examining the individual experience of gig work through the lens of job quality, our conceptual understanding of good and bad work and the challenges and opportunities in analysing and improving job quality in the gig economy, can be advanced.

As such, and in support of the overall aim of the study, the following objectives have been generated.

1) To develop theoretical perspectives on job quality and examine the extent to which gig work is consistent with current notions of good work.
2) To explore how individual factors shape and influence an individual's quality of work experience.
3) To explore the perceived influence of technology on individual experiences and perceptions of gig work.

The following section provides a brief overview of the thesis to guide the reader through the remainder of the study.

1.4 Structure of the Thesis

The main body of the study is divided into eight chapters. Firstly (Chapter 2), and in order to position the study within its broader context, consideration is given to the changing nature of work in industrialised societies and the impact this has had on the types and quality of jobs available in contemporary society. Following on from this (Chapter 3), the gig economy is demarcated and contextualised before setting out the theoretical framework which will underpin the investigation. To this end, there is growing consensus that job quality is a multi-dimensional concept which can be best understood through a combined approach accounting for both the objective characteristics of job quality, such as wages and safety at work, as well as worker characteristics and

issues of individual 'fit' (Kalleberg, 2016; Knox, et al., 2015). As such, a theoretical framework is developed (Chapter 4) which allows for an exploration of the differences that exist within and between different dimensions of job quality and the influence of individual, technological and contextual factors on the quality of work.

Chapter 5 outlines and discusses methodological choices underpinning this investigation of job quality within the gig economy including the research philosophy and design and the strengths and limitations of the methods employed.

Chapters 6 and 7 represent a presentation of an analysis of key findings. More specifically, Chapter 6 provides an overview of individuals subjective experiences and perceptions of key job quality components including wages and social benefits; job content (including the pace of work and meaningfulness); work autonomy; job security (type of contract and stability); training (formal and on the job); opportunities for advancement; safe working environment (physical work conditions and work-related risks); working hours (including distribution of working hours); social working environment and; participation. In the first part of Chapter 7, individual differences, such as the characteristics, needs and preferences of the worker, and the influence on subjective experiences and evaluations of gig work, are explored. Following on from this, the second part of the chapter provides an overview of evidence related to the impact of technology on individual's experiences of working in the gig economy, and key aspects of job quality, such as autonomy and flexible scheduling.

In Chapter 8 the findings are discussed in relation to debates within the wider job quality literature. The chapter has four main sections. In the first section consideration is given to the quality of jobs in the gig economy and the variations between platforms. In the second section consideration is given to the reasons for individual variations in the quality of work experience in the gig economy. Third, the temporal aspects of job quality are considered. Finally, the impact of technology on the quality of work experience is also explored.

In the final chapter (Chapter 9) consideration is given to the studies key contributions and the theoretical and practical implications of the findings. Consideration is also given to the limitations of the study and proposals for future research with recommendations provided for policy makers and labour interest groups seeking to make improvements in the quality of work.

Chapter 2- The Changing Nature of Work in the 'New' Economy

2.0 Introduction

The following chapter (the first of three literature review chapters) examines the literature concerning the changing nature of work and the impact of such changes on the nature and quality of work experience in advanced industrial societies. The purpose of this chapter is to examine the ways in which the nature of work is changing in order to provide a broader context through which the emergence of the gig economy and the nature of gig work, can be better understood. Following an initial discussion of theoretical perspectives on the changing nature of work and the economic, social and political characteristics of the 'new' economy, attention is paid to the atypical forms of employment, characteristic of the modern labour market and of which gig work, as an alternative to the 'standard' employment relationship, represents a variant of. This leads into the following chapter which seeks to define gig work, setting the boundaries for the current study.

2.1 What is Work?

Work exists in a wide range of institutional forms across different cultures and can be both paid or unpaid, forced or voluntary and may take place within a market or outside of one (e.g. domestic work). Indeed, what constitutes an activity as 'work' as opposed to, for example, leisure, is said to relate, not to payment for the activity, but whether the activity involves some sort of physical or mental activity which is performed in order to achieve a particular aim or task (Taylor, 2004). Nonetheless, generally when considering work, reference is being made to the activities performed by an individual in exchange for a wage or fee or, in other words, a job. It is this kind of formal paid work which underpins the concept of 'employment' and to which we will refer when discussing work throughout the remainder of this thesis.

In addition to its role in production, work is said to be a key contributor to human welfare and the proper functioning of organisations and societies with individuals spending a substantial proportion of their lives at work (Kalleberg, 2016). Paid work not only provides financial gains, allowing individuals to meet basic needs and participate in society (Alcock, 2003) but it also has been linked to a number of other benefits providing a route out of poverty (Kemp, et al., 2004) in addition to psychosocial and health benefits related to the social aspects of work (Cooke, et al., 2013) and associated feelings of 'happiness' and self-esteem (Warr, 2007). Work has also been linked to philosophical and moralistic benefits, being associated with aspects of human development (Clark,

2015) and religious duty (Weber, 1903). To this end, paid employment has consistently ranked as one of the most important determinants of 'quality of life' in Europe (Clark, 2005; Drobnic, et al., 2010).

However, whilst there is general consensus that work can have a transformational impact on individual's lives, there is also a growing recognition that simply being in employment is not enough to guarantee positive outcomes of work. As such, and with individuals in modern commercial societies spending an increasing proportion of their lives working (Taylor, et al., 2017), determining what constitutes 'good work' and how to enhance jobs has become an increasingly important issue for workers, employers and policymakers. To this end, job quality features prominently within international and domestic labour policy standards and initiatives. For example, the provision of opportunities for 'decent work' represents the policy agenda put forward by the International Labour Organisation to raise labour standards across Member States (ILO, 2017); a strategy-for-action which, is included as a key policy objective in the 'New Skills and Jobs' initiative put forward as part of the Europe 2020 strategy[2] and which underpins a number of domestic initiatives including, for example, in the UK governments 'good work' plan. Moreover, with the quality of work shown to have significant consequences for, not only a worker's economic, social and psychological well-being (Kalleberg & Vaissy, 2005), but also for productivity and performance (Vandenbrande, et al., 2012; Buhai, et al., 2008), the quality of jobs has become a key concern in sociological studies of work. At the centre of debates regarding the 'future of work' is the recently emergent gig economy (Sargeant, 2017). Indeed, the rapid expansion of gig working over the past five years has led to predictions of the 'uberization' of work (Fleming, 2017). As such, the gig economy may provide an opportunity to test current predications regarding the broader implications of changes in work, including, for example, the introduction of new technology, for employment and society.

The following sections provide a discussion of current evidence related to the changing nature of work and the implications of these changes for the nature and quality of employment in contemporary society.

[2] http://ec.europa.eu/eu2020/pdf/COMPLET EN BARROSO 007 - Europe 2020 - EN version.pdf

2.2 The Changing Nature of Work

Over the past several decades, the nature of 'work' and its place in society, is said to have gone through a period of 'transformation' with several drivers of change in the external environment coming together to influence the organisation, supervision and arrangement of wage based work (Burke & Ng, 2006). The traditional notion of 'a job' is relatively recent, created during the onset of the industrial revolution in order to provide the 'human capacities' required to man the factories (Landry, et al., 2005). Work itself became routinized as artisan production and craftsmanship were replaced by work on factory production lines, characterized by standardized working processes, the strict division of labour, fixed time schedules and close supervision (Wren, 2011). As such, work moved from being an activity in which an individual utilised their skill to produce an output of value, to a 'job' in which a narrow set of tasks was performed in return for a salary (Maitland & Thomson, 2011). This 'job simplification' became embedded within the industrial sector, spreading from manufacturing to other domains (Parker, et al., 2001). However, in 1924 a group of researchers led by Elton Mayo conducted a series of experiments looking at worker productivity in what have come to be known as the "Hawthorne Studies". Within these studies, initially intended to measure the impact of workplace illumination, it was found that individual and social processes played a key role in shaping workers attitudes and behaviours, with good work relationships and the need for recognition, security and belonging, proving more influential than management control and physical working conditions, in their influence upon worker productivity (Smith, 1974). These studies and the recognition of the worker as a 'social man' changed the way in which workers were viewed giving rise to the 'human relations' movement in which worker psychology and person-organisation fit, replaced the mechanistic view of labour which had thus far remained dominant (Smith, 1998).

The growing popularity of the human relations approach as a solution to productivity and behavioural problems in the workplace is said to have arisen largely in response to broader changes in the environment (Aycan & Kanungo, 2014). For example, accelerated levels of globalisation, increased international competition, rapid technological change, and shifting worker demographics, have forced organisations to adapt, leading to significant changes in the way in which jobs are structured and the way in which employment relations are defined (Howard, 1995). Indeed, over the past 50 years there has been a rapid acceleration of globalization resulting in increasing levels of international competition and a significant growth in different forms of 'offshoring'

leading to a substantial decrease in production and employment in manufacturing in Western countries (Urry, 2014). Whilst manufacturing accounted for a quarter of all employment in 1978, this has fallen to only 8% in 2016 with service jobs now accounting for 83% of employment in the UK (Abel, et al., 2016). This decline in industrial manufacturing and the correlated growth in service work, gave rise to a growing number of theories related to work and employment in 'post-industrial' society where 'knowledge' would replace productive labour as the main source of value (Vogt, 2016). Theories of post-industrialism, whilst somewhat diverse in nature, are generally associated with a period of transition within an industrialised country in which the importance of manufacturing declines, whilst that of service creation, information and 'knowledge' continues to grow, becoming the dominant source of wealth creation within the economy (see for example Bell, 1973). Within these knowledge-intensive service industries there is said to be a growing reliance upon highly skilled labour and a decline in the reliance upon middle/low skilled labour (CIPD and ILC, 2015). Thus, as the industrial structure of a country changes, so does the type of occupation which is supported. For example, as an economy transitions from an industrial to an information-based society, the value and prevalence of manual labour and blue-collar work declines, whilst that of professional and technical based work, grows (Bell, 1973). Whilst it is important to note that, theories of post-industrialism and the validity of some sort of epochal change at societal level as a consequence of a decline in manufacturing and an increase in broadly defined 'service work', remains the subject of debate (Beynon, 1992), it is undeniable that changes in the wider economy such as accelerated levels of globalisation and technological change, are impacting the structure of organisations, the nature of work and the way in which the workforce is configured.

2.2.1 The Impact of Technological Change

One such factor which features centrally in theories of post-industrial society and which is said to have 'radically' changed the organisation of work in contemporary society, relates to the acceleration of technological change and the infusion of new technologies in the workplace (Landry, et al., 2005). Technology has the power to create jobs, such as the web designer or the digital marketer, positions which did not exist prior to the introduction of the computer, but it also has the power to eliminate jobs as has been witnessed, for example, in the replacement of phone operators with digital switchboards. Indeed, the introduction of new technology and its impact on skills remains at the centre of the deskilling/reskilling controversy within the labour process debate. Whilst a range

of theories have emerged, these can generally be organised into two dominant 'camps' which have developed in response to the major research of Braverman (1974) (Spencer, 2000). First, is the body of work which remains largely supportive of Braverman's 'deskilling' thesis and the 'proletarianization' of the employee, with the introduction of new technology seen as an extension of managerial control over the labour process, ensuring the subordination of the workers knowledge and skills through the mechanization of tasks and the replacement of workers with automation (Ritzer, 1993). This pessimistic view is seen by some as an elimination of jobs and an erosion of the quality of work as a consequence of technological development with the relegation of previously skilled craftsmen to little more than machine operators (see for example Wallace, 1989). In opposition to this are those which reject Braverman's thesis, favouring optimistic theories of employment up/reskilling which describe an 'evolution' rather than a replacement of skilled work as a result of technological change, with an upgrading of skills and an increase in task discretion in order for the new technology to be utilized effectively (Penn, 1983). Under this slightly more optimistic scenario, it is possible that such changes will result in the rise of the 'creative class' and a wealthy and highly productive society where the 'job' entails fewer hours, better wages and higher levels of worker autonomy (Landry, et al., 2005).

In reality, a growing number of empirical studies investigating employee proletarianization and the impact of new technology, have provided evidence of a combination of both up/reskilling and deskilling as a consequence of technological change (examples include Crompton & Jones, 1984; Carey, 2007; Gallie, 1991). There does remain some scepticism in relation to whether these supposed forms of up/reskilling, in practice, provide a covert form of deskilling (as is frequently debated in relation to the introduction of ICT technology) (Taylor & Bain, 2003). However such studies, as opposed to denying the deskilling theory, commonly highlight the role of management in the implementation of new technology and in determining the impact this will have on the quality of work and levels of productivity (Wall, et al., 1987). Indeed, despite the contrasting points of view as to the impact of technological change on the skills and configuration of the modern workforce, one thing over which there remains general consensus, is that the development of new technology is having a significant impact on the nature of employment in contemporary society. Just as the concept of a 'job' developed in response to technological changes during the industrial revolution, a new

set of changes requires a reconsideration of what employment might look like in a new, information-based society.

The growing reliance upon technology in the workplace has also raised concerns over the divide in pay and reward differences between the technological haves and have nots (Landry, et al., 2005). Indeed, it has been argued that technological change has had a polarizing impact on the quality of jobs leading to growing levels of inequality between those at the top and the bottom of the skills hierarchy (Goos & Manning, 2007). Whilst it has been suggested that such impacts are to some extent overstated with structural changes in the labour market arising in response to a number of other factors including the institutional framework (Fernandez-Macias, 2012), new technologies have allowed employers to reduce their labour costs through, for example, the automation of jobs or the ability to hire workers on a short term, on demand basis as is seen within the gig economy.

Technology has not only had an impact on the types of job available, but it has also had a significant impact on how people work and live, a primary example of which is the growth in 'flexible' and remote working (Wallace, 2004). Work is no longer bound by a physical location with the rapid spread of internet enabled, mobile technology allowing organisational functions to be performed from almost anywhere in the world. Indeed, 'self-management' is frequently recognised as being a central element of future work (Maitland & Thomson, 2011). As the information system becomes the basis for all business transactions, what is necessary for the performance of a job is not access to a physical office, but access to a network (Landry, et al., 2005). This ability to locate jobs remotely has resulted in the emergence of a 'global' or 'international' workforce in which domestic and overseas workers compete for the same jobs (Vance & Paik, 2010). This not only increases competition within the labour market, suppressing wages and resulting in increasing levels of 'offshoring' in the service sector (Metters & Verma, 2008), but it also poses a number of challenges for organisations attempting to manage a global workforce often across different time zones and with the added difficulty of cultural and language barriers (Burke & Ng, 2006).

In addition, despite the flexibility provided in relation to the physical location of work and the associated positive outcomes related to improved work-life balance (Hill, et al., 2003), the rapid spread of information communication and mobile technology is said to have blurred the lines between work and non-work life, challenging the ideology of work-life segregation prevalent during the industrial era (Townsend & Batchelor, 2005). This

blurring of boundaries is said to have contributed to an increase in workload for the individual and a growing work-life imbalance with the permeation of work in home life frequently being linked to such things as work-family conflict (Mackewan & Barling, 1994), an increase in work-related stress (Westman, 2001) and so called 'workaholism' (Eikhof, et al., 2007). Thus, whilst some of the impacts of technological change on work related well-being may be positive, such as the provision of opportunities to work from home, others are likely to present challenges to employee well-being leading to work-home life interference, work overload and increased levels of work-related stress (Guest, 2017). As such, the relationship between technology and job quality represents a key area of concern and one in need of further exploration.

2.2.2 The Changing Structure of Organisations and Industrial Relations

A further common theme of 'post-industrial' society which has affected the structure of the modern workforce relates to the breakdown of the neat separation between the social and economic realms and of the institutions of reconciliation (Piore, 2004). Over time, both the family structure and the corporate enterprise have become less stable and well defined, appearing in increasingly diverse forms. For example, large organisations which occupied seemingly well-defined and perpetual positions within the industrial landscape (such as British Telecoms, the UK telephone monopoly or Rolls Royce, specialising in luxury cars and later aero engines), have gone through significant periods of re-structuring, often engaging in operations outside of their 'core competencies' in order to secure their survival and remain competitive in the global market place (Piore, 2011). In addition, as the cost of communications has fallen, the structure of organisations has changed with a growing emphasis on workplace democracy and managements pursuit of 'co-operation' rather than 'control' (Malone, 2004). Middle level management has been gradually eroded as networks provide ease of access to information for all workers resulting in a flattening of corporate structures (Burke & Ng, 2006).

Further to this, as the structure of the organisation has changed, so has the nature of industrial relations and in particular, the way in which conflict between the social and economic realms is resolved. Trade unions which had become the representative for workers throughout the industrial era, resolving workplace conflict through negotiations between trade unions and enterprise, have seen a gradual, long-term erosion of both their powers and their membership as a consequence of a growing body of 'anti-union' legislation and an increasingly liberal employment regime. Liberal market regimes, such as the UK and Ireland, can be said to be characterised by a 'laissez faire' approach to

regulation, underpinned by theories of perfect competition associated with classic theories of economics, and the assumption that working conditions are best regulated by market forces (Smith & Skinner, 1982). Within such regimes, employment regulation is minimal and organised labour seen as disruptive, with an assumption that market forces are the most effective mechanism in the achievement of labour market equilibrium (Gaillie, 2007). With large parts of the heavily unionised public sector privatised in the 1980s, increasing legal restrictions placed on the activities of trade unions and a growing number of 'individual' employment rights arising, for example, as a consequence of Britain's membership of the European Union; collective procedures have seen a significant decline (Brown, et al., 2000). Indeed, the influence of trade unions has waned significantly with membership levels falling to around half of those seen during the peak of the trade union movement in 1979 when over 13 million workers were members of a union (DBIS, 2016). This increasingly liberal approach to employment protections evident in policy development since the early 1980s and the increasing restrictions placed on the activities of trade unions, whilst having been proven to have little effect in addressing the UK's productivity problem (Broadberry & O'Mahony, 2004; Brinkley, 2015), has been linked to a reduction in 'fairness' at work, posing a threat to well-being (Guest, 2017). This decline in collective bargaining has dramatically altered the nature of employment relations with negotiations and resolution of conflict increasingly dealt with on an individual rather than collective basis, exacerbating the imbalance of power within the employment relationship and raising concerns over the potential for worker exploitation (Gill-Mclure, 2014).

Despite periods of labour market regulation, de-regulation and in some cases re-regulation, the UK's employment regime remains largely liberal with levels of employment protection in the UK remaining some of the weakest amongst OECD countries (OECD, 2016). Whilst it had been argued that these weaker employment rights and the labour market 'flexibility' serve to stimulate overall employment growth and can aid in the reduction of job losses following an economic crisis such as that seen in 2008-2009, evidence indicated that the level of job loss was actually lower in countries with stronger employment protections raising questions over the supposed 'positive' impact of labour market de-regulation (Heyes & Lewis, 2014). In addition, these weaker employment protections have been linked to a number of negative labour market effects in the UK including low wages, increasing employment insecurity and high levels of youth unemployment (when compared to other OECD countries) (Brinkley, 2015).

However, whilst the changing legislative landscape has undoubtedly altered the nature of the legal relationship between employer and employee and the structure of the labour market as a whole, evidence as to the impact of the lack of protective rights and the erosion of the 'standard employment relationship' on the quality of employment remains somewhat contradictory. For example, whilst objectively job quality is said to be lowest in free market economies with the absence of regulation and the hostility towards trade unions resulting in a suppression of wage growth and a deterioration in employment conditions, (Holman, 2013), UK workers still reported higher levels of overall job satisfaction than workers in dualist and inclusive regimes (such as Germany, France and Italy), where stronger employment protections are provided (Brinkley, 2015). This conflicting evidence raises questions over the extent to which employment policies are effective in protecting and promoting the interests of workers and thus in their ability to contribute to improved opportunities for good work highlighting the importance of adopting a definition of job quality which moves beyond issues of employment regulation.

2.2.3 The Changing Structure of the Workforce

The collapse of the 'post-war' model of society is said to represent as much social change in the organisation of society, as it does structural changes of organisations and labour institutions (Inglehart, 1971). For example, the increase in female labour force participation as a result of social and political progression, is said to have undermined the 'male breadwinner' model which typified family life during the industrial era (Piore, 2004). A raft of legislative changes have occurred which have not only attempted to create a more 'equal' workplace but which promote 'family-friendly' employment, leading to an increase in single parent and two-income families (Maitland & Thomson, 2011)[3]. Social identities triggered by ethnicity, sex, age, religious orientation, and disability have come to surpass identities associated with the workplace as axes of political mobilisation whilst organisations which represent such groups, make demands in the workplace which are only understood in the broader social context of which work has become part (Piore, 2011). To this end, one of the most powerful forces said to be affecting work and organisations relates to the modern workforce and, in particular, changing worker demographics (Burke & Ng, 2006). With an increasing yet ageing population in the

[3] Despite the prohibition of discrimination on the grounds of gender since the 1970's, issues of equality in the workplace are ongoing with a gender pay gap of 9.1% in 2016. In addition, only 10.4% of executive directors of FTSE 100 companies are female.

United Kingdom, a gradual shift is occurring in relation to the demography of the workforce. Individuals are increasingly working 'longer' with the removal of the default retirement age and the increase in the state pension age (rising to 66 for both men and women by 2020 and 68 by 2046[4]) contributing to increased levels of workforce participation amongst older workers. This increase in older workers remaining in or joining the workforce, combined with restrictive welfare reforms and a prolonged period of austerity as a consequence of the recent economic crisis, is said to have contributed to a short term over supply of labour further exacerbating issues of falling real wages and rising levels of job insecurity (Whittaker, 2015). However, despite the short-term increase in the supply of labour, with an ageing workforce, organisations are faced with a number of longer-term challenges in order to attract and retain key skills and knowledge. For example, organisations remain vulnerable to the threat of early retirement with fewer young people entering the labour market to replace the retiring 'baby boomer' generation (Capelli, 2005). In order to mitigate against a shortage of both skills and workers, organisations will need to design jobs and develop policies which account for the different needs, expectations and characteristics of older employees in particular, and which facilitate the transfer of knowledge between the generations.

The workforce is becoming increasingly diverse, not only in relation to age, but also in relation to gender and ethnicity. For example, net migration in the UK has been positive since the 1990s with an increase in magnitude following the expansion of the European Union throughout the 2000s (ONS, 2015)[5]. In addition, and as discussed above, there are also more woman in the workforce than ever before with this trend expected to continue as advancements are made in workplace equality and countries seek to make better use of their female populations in order to address issues related to the ageing population and to meet the needs of an increasingly skill dependent economy (Dunlop, 2009). Despite this increase in participation of historically marginalised groups of workers, migrants, disabled workers, woman and older employees are frequently faced with barriers to employment, systemic discrimination and inequality in the workplace which is unexplained by socioeconomic factors such as education or industry factors (Abel, et al., 2016). In order to match the changes taking place and ensure a sustainable workforce is

[4] See timetable for proposed changes at https://www.gov.uk/government/news/proposed-new-timetable-for-state-pension-age-increases

[5] Immigration levels in the UK are expected to drop significantly as a result of increasingly restrictive immigration policies raising some scepticism as to the role of migrant labour in filling the labour supply gap left by older workers (CIPD and ILC, 2015).

maintained, it will be necessary for organisations to adapt to the growing heterogeneity of the workforce and learn how to manage an increasingly diverse group of workers.

2.2.4 The Changing Values and Expectations of the Modern Workforce

In addition to the changing characteristics of the modern workforce, the expectations and values of these workers are said to be remarkably different from those in the past with growing importance placed on work-life balance and leisure activities (Smola & Sutton, 2002). For many workers, particularly within developed countries, life no longer revolves around work and employers are increasingly unable to rely on the assumption that workers will accept 'standard' conditions of employment as a given (Maitland & Thomson, 2011). Indeed, change-cultural theorists such as Whyte (1956), Hodgkinson (1967) and Mclelland (1971), whilst diverse in their views as to why such a change has occurred, have identified a steady decline in the value attached to work since the early 1950s and a depreciation in the general desire to work (Vecchio, 1980). Workers have expressed growing concern for non-work, leisure activities, whilst the growth in 'recreational' industries is said to provide further testament of a shift towards greater interest in the quality of an individual's leisure life versus the quality of their work (ibid). Thus, it has been argued that a 'leisure ethic' is increasingly replacing the traditional protestant work ethic (Robertson, 1985; Riesman, 1958); the likes of which is cited as a central force in Weber's (1903) theory of modern capitalism.

Perhaps in response to the advancements of communications technology, there appears to be growing societal demand for greater flexibility and autonomy at work. If a job can be done without sticking to a rigid schedule of time and location, there is an increasing expectation that flexibility will be on offer (Maitland & Thomson, 2011). This desire for greater flexibility is said to be partly reflected in the growing trend towards part time and self-employment (CIPD and ILC, 2015). However, it is difficult to determine the extent to which this trend is connected to cyclical factors and the recent recession, or to more deep-seated structural changes in the labour markets as a consequence of such things as the growth in female participation. For example, under conditions of economic uncertainty and with increasing international competition, organisations have become increasingly cautious about hiring full-time employees with the full range of pension and employment benefits (Landry, et al., 2005). Thus, although full time, permanent work still represents the majority in the United Kingdom (63%), there remains a notable shift from the norm of 9-5 employment with a single employer and long-term job security, to non-permanent forms of casual work characterised by variable hours, limited job security

and piece rate payment (McGreevy, 2003). Indeed, in Smith's (2001) study of employment trends in the new economy it was argued that uncertainty and unpredictability, and to some extent personal risk, have diffused into a wide range of post-industrial workplaces where opportunities and advancement are intertwined with temporariness and risk' (p.7). The employment relationship has moved from being what (Rousseau, 1989) described as a 'relational' contract with a high degree of mutual interdependence and emotional involvement, to a 'transactional' contract based upon the short-term exchange of money for skills. Previously the relational psychological contract of employment was underpinned by notions of mutual trust, respect and loyalty and the expectation that in return for long term job security, the employee would remain committed to the organisation (Robinson & Morrison, 2000). However, with an erosion of long term job security, workers are increasingly focused upon immediate job needs and career management, prioritising factors such as personal growth, transferable skills and networking opportunities (De Meusse, et al., 2001). This poses significant challenges for organisations who, in an increasingly competitive business environment, will need to adapt to the changing expectations of the modern workforce, in order to attract and retain a motivated and committed workforce (Lester & Kickull, 2001). The first step in this adaptation is the need to better understand the needs and expectations of the contemporary workforce.

2.2.5 The Growth in 'Flexible' Employment

Taken together, the economic, technological and demographic changes outlined within this chapter have led to a dramatic shift in the way in which organisations manage their human resource (Cooper & Burke, 2002). Indeed, as organisations and respond to growing levels of international competition and economic uncertainty, increased emphasis is placed upon 'flexible' employment practices (Brooks, et al., 2004). However, whilst the advantages of 'workforce flexibility' for organisations are well documented (Cappelli & Keller, 2013), the implications for workers appear to be less positive. Indeed, the focus on labour market efficiency is said to have resulted in a gradual erosion of security in employment and a shifting of labour market risk from organisations to individuals, as employers back away from long term employment norms in favour of new 'contingent' working arrangements (Hacker, 2006).

The increase in non-standard, flexible working arrangements, such as the increased use of temporary contracts seen throughout the United States and Western Europe, has caused growing concern over the 'erosion' in the quality of work and the rise in 'under-

employment' (Kauhanen & Natti, 2015). This trend towards increased labour market flexibility is also recognised as a key contributor to the 'polarization' of the labour market and the creation of a growing number of 'bad jobs', particularly for those at the bottom end of the occupational hierarchy (Kalleberg, 2016). Indeed, it has been argued that changes in the nature of work and the conditions surrounding it, risk eroding work related well-being with harmful consequences for both employees and organisations (Guest, 2017). With public concern mounting about the growing levels of inequality within the UK labour market, calls were made for a review of modern employment practices and a focus on the provision of 'good work for all' and, in particular, the protection of workers in low income, low skill sectors engaged through increasingly insecure employment contracts (Taylor, et al., 2017).

Despite the growing consensus within the literature over these structural changes in the labour market and the growth in new types of non-standard working arrangements (Herzenberg, et al., 2000), most of management practices and theories about economic work, remain based upon industrial age working practices and what has become known as the 'standard employment relationship' (SER) (Capelli & Keller, 2013). Thus, despite changing attitudes towards work, many assumptions of what a good job will look like remain based upon the model of work which prevailed during the industrial era. Indeed, whether the trend towards the increased use of these non-standard working arrangements and the erosion of the 'standard employment relationship' should in fact be considered problematic, is said to depend largely on the 'quality' of these nonstandard forms of work (Kauhanen & Natti, 2015).

Furthermore, whilst there is growing interest in the quality of nonstandard or independent forms of work more generally (MGI, 2016; TUC, 2016; ILO, 2016), sociologists, psychologists and organisational scholars have frequently referenced the focus in current research, on the structure and economics of the modern labour market, neglecting people's experiences within these markets (Petriglieri, et al., 2018). This has seen calls for exploring the lived experience of contemporary workers and a revival of the debate as to what constitutes a good job (Ashford, et al., 2007). By exploring the lived experiences of individuals working in the gig economy, this study can contribute to these broader debates concerning the implications of longer-term trends on individual's experiences of employment in contemporary society in addition to allowing for comparisons with other forms of contemporary and nonstandard employment.

2.3 Conclusions

The aim of this chapter was to examine the ways in which the nature of work is changing in order to provide a broader context through which the emergence of the gig economy and the nature of gig work, could be better understood. In considering the combined effects of societal changes and changes in the patterns of employment, particularly the growth in casual and temporary employment, concerns are raised over a perceived deterioration in the quality of jobs in the modern economy. However, whilst such classifications and the distinction between standard and nonstandard employment conditions have traditionally been used to distinguish between good and bad jobs, changes in the workforce and a growing number of variations in alternative forms of work means such distinctions (e.g. the length of job tenure) no longer remain useful in classifying work, hindering the ability to build knowledge about these new working arrangements (Capelli & Keller, 2013). In order for work design theory, human resource practices and social policy development to keep pace with the changing nature of work, our understanding of what constitutes a 'job', must be expanded (Grant, et al., 2010).

Therefore, and in response to calls for a greater emphasis on the aspects of work quality for those in nonstandard forms of work (Ashford, et al., 2007), this thesis seeks to explore the lived experiences of work, for those engaged in an emergent and somewhat extreme variant of casual work; gig work. With the model of 'work' said to be on the cusp of a 'major transformation' with changing worker demographics, advancements in technology and the acceleration of globalisation, threatening a revolution in working practices (Maitland & Thomson, 2011); it is necessary to explore how these changes and the introduction of disruptive technology in the workplace, can be said to have affected the individuals experience of work. With technology and labour market flexibility featuring centrally within the gig economy, the gig economy provides an opportunity to explore these related issues and the impact of these longer-term trends, on individuals experience of employment in contemporary society. To this end, by exploring job quality in the gig economy, this study can contribute to a greater understanding of what good work means in the twenty first century and how trade unions, policy makers and employers should respond in order to improve job quality and support the achievement of the 'good work' agenda.

In order to examine the quality of gig work, it is first necessary to define what gig work is. As such, the following chapter will define what gig work is before examining current

knowledge about the gig economy and its workers and the extent to which this type of work reflects the more general employment trends identified within this chapter.

Chapter 3 – The Gig Economy

3.0 Introduction

Having considered some of the changes in the nature of work and the broader social and economic conditions under which gig work has emerged, the following chapter will focus upon defining the gig economy. To this end, the purpose of the following chapter is to set the context of the research project in which issues of job quality will be explored. The first part of the chapter will begin by clarifying and defining what is meant by the gig economy and gig work in order to establish the parameters of the study. Following on from this, current evidence regarding the size and growth of the gig economy will be reviewed. Finally, an overview is provided of current research relating to the nature and quality of gig work in order to establish the state of current knowledge related to the research objectives and further refine key issues in need of further exploration.

3.1 The Emergence of the Gig Economy

As discussed in Chapter 2, the fluidity of work settings characteristics of the 'new' economy is said to represent a fundamental departure from traditional work environment and fixed 'alternative' worksites such as home (Torraco, 2005). Indeed, the emergence of the gig economy has been said to be part of a larger shift within the cultural and business environment which has seen the emergence of the 'collaborative economy', including such concepts as the 'sharing economy', the 'gift economy' and the 'barter economy' (EPSC, 2016). Over the last five years, the trend towards the use of digital, online platforms to source on-demand work, has accelerated and is said to be showing little sign of slowing down with 1 in 4 young people aged between 16-30, indicating they would consider some form of this work in the future (Balaram, et al., 2017). Further to this, since Uber started in March 2009 (a company which has rapidly become the face of the highly-publicised gig economy) it has experienced unprecedented growth and is now active in 85 countries and over 900 cities around the globe with a company valuation in excess of $82 billion (Bond & Bullock, 2019). This success has come in spite of significant controversy surrounding issues of leadership, discrimination and harassment, customer safety and employment policies, the likes of which have seen Uber face a number of ongoing legal battles, even being banned from operating in Italy, Spain and Denmark. Indeed, the rapid growth of these companies appears to have generated a divisive response amongst policy makers and scholars. Whilst some have advocated the encouragement of technological innovation and the increased use of liberal and flexible modern

employment practices, others have raised concerns over the impact of technological disruption on the standard of living and the potential for a 'race to the bottom' in employment conditions (Balaram, et al., 2017).

3.2 What is The Gig Economy?

The term 'gig economy' is said to have first arisen in the aftermath of the global financial crash where many workers lost their permanent, full-time jobs and increasingly turned to casual, freelance work or 'gigs' in order to support themselves in the absence of more desirable alternatives (Hook, 2015). The notion of the gig economy has since evolved, encompassing a growing range of digital online platforms developed by organisations using technology to connect workers with tasks, involving both online and offline work, in what are frequently referred to as 'online' or 'digital' marketplaces (Minter, 2017). The perception of digital, irregular, task based work or 'gigs' applies to a range of different functions across a range of industries and involving a number of different types of business making the concept itself rather imprecise (Stewart & Stanford, 2017). Indeed, with no commonly agreed upon definition and a raft of seemingly transposable titles, the gig economy and the type of work which occurs within it, remains a somewhat ambiguous concept. For example, whilst terms such as the gig, 'collaborative' or 'sharing economy' are often used interchangeably and can all be said to be part of the wider 'platform economy' (Kenney & Zysman, 2016), the concepts are in fact, notably distinct. A brief description of some of these new economic concepts and their distinguishing features can be seen in table 3.1 below.

Platform Economy	
Sharing/Collaborative Economy	Platforms which facilitate the exchange or sharing of assets: Individuals are connected via digital platforms allowing them to rent or borrow assets from each other rather than purchase and own them.
Gig Economy	Labour based platforms which facilitate actual work and production: Service providers offer for sale their skills and time in order to meet the on-demand requirements of the platform's customers.
Sales Economy	Platforms through which ownership of goods is transferred in exchange for cash often on a consumer to consumer basis.
Barter Economy	A cashless system where individuals use a digital platform to trade goods and services at negotiated rates.
Gift Economy	A system, facilitated by digital platforms, where goods and services, rather than being traded or sold, are given without an agreement as to a payment or reciprocal reward to be made in return.

Table 3.1 - New Economic Concepts (Cohen, 2017; Stokes, et al., 2014; Flanagan, 2017; Glennen, 2016)

As can be seen from Table 3.1, whilst the terms are often used interchangeably, there remain important conceptual differences, particularly between the commonly confused collaborative or sharing economy and the gig economy. Whilst the former category arose from the sharing or utilisation of assets, the latter is based upon the sale of labour and the utilisation of an individual's skills and time (O'Connor, 2016). Thus, while the term 'sharing' can be said to be applicable in relation to platforms such as BlaBlaCar, where individuals 'share' underused assets such as cars, the same cannot be said to apply to relationships within the gig economy - such as those seen in the case of Uber, Deliveroo or Pimlico- which, as is the case in employment, remain based upon the exchange of labour for remuneration.

A further distinction to be made in relation to digital platforms is between 'labour platforms' which facilitate the organisation of productive tasks, and 'capital platforms' which facilitate the sale and rental of various assets (Stewart & Stanford, 2017). For example, asset-based platforms such as Ebay have provided the platform for consumer to consumer sales since 1995. Indeed, it is Ebay which is attributed with the rise of the 'micro-multinationals', giving small businesses and the self-employed access to a wide,

often international, market place (Vezina & Hanne, 2013). However, it has long been recognised that the very nature of work within the manufacturing or goods sector is fundamentally different from that within the service sector, with a growing body of literature attempting to understand and manage this transition from goods to services seen within the 'post-industrial society' (Bell, 1976; Joseph & Gilmore, 1998; Iverson & Wren, 1998). Indeed, even the origins of the word 'gig' indicate some sort of personal performance, beyond the mere provision of goods via an online trading system. In a study conducted by JP Morgan into the use of online platforms, significant differences were found in the demographics and income volatility of those selling goods through platforms such as Ebay, and those selling their labour (Farrell & Greig, 2016). Thus, whilst platforms such as Ebay exist as part of the wider platform economy, the types of work undertaken on these platforms remains fundamentally different from gig work which, again, remains based upon the basic exchange of labour for remuneration.

In addition to considering the nature of the exchange, it is also important to note a similar distinction in the types of work performed by those partaking in virtual or 'crowd work' which can be performed anywhere, and those performing 'real world' tasks within a specific location (De Groen, 2016; De Stefano, 2015). For example, whilst those providing physical services are competing on a local basis and as such are subject to a similar cost of living as their competitors and some level of geographical proximity, those engaging in virtual work are part of a global marketplace with workers in the developed countries facing competition from low-wage economies (Singer, 2014; Aloisi, 2015). Similarly, the methods used for payment and for adjudicating tasks were found to vary considerably when comparing crowd work and gig work (Eurofound, 2013). Further to this, gig work or on demand work intermediaries, generally take on a greater level of responsibility in relation to the selection, supervision, and discipline of gig workers and thus can be said to have characteristics more similar to that of an employer when compared to those which facilitate crowd work (Stewart & Stanford, 2017). Thus, the employment conditions and legal issues for virtual workers and physical taskers can be said to be vastly different. As such, whilst it is recognised that 'virtual gig work' is itself a growing phenomenon worthy of further investigation which may be considered a sub-category of gig work, it remains outside the scope of this thesis which is particularly interested in the recent drivers of growth in the platform economy, namely the increased use of local, labour-based platforms.

Having identified what gig work is not and the position of the gig economy within the broader platform economy, the following section will provide the definition of gig work which is adopted within this thesis.

3.3 Defining Gig Work

Despite the variety of terminology used, there are said to be six key features which typify most forms of gig work including: engagement on an ad hoc or task-by-task basis; an irregular work schedule driven by fluctuations in demand for services; the need for the worker to invest or provide their own capital or equipment used in their work (high levels of personal risk); the remote location of work; piecework payment collected by the platform who then disburses this to the worker (minus a fee) and; the organisation of work through some sort of digital mediator, such as web based platform or a digital Smartphone application (Stewart & Stanford, 2017; Minter, 2017). As such and in accordance with the aforementioned characteristics, gig work can be defined as 'platform based employment which uses digital technology to mediate the process of commissioning, supervising, delivery and compensating work performed by workers on a contingent, piece-work basis' (Flanagan, 2017, p. 2).

Whilst many of the core characteristics of gig work are not necessarily new, with features such as piece based work, precarious contractual conditions and irregular scheduling evident throughout the history of capitalism (Stanford, 2017), the platform technology used to organise modern gig jobs represents a unique characteristic of this type of work. Indeed, the outsourcing of work traditionally conducted by an employee to an 'army' of independent contractors in the form of an 'open call' would not have been possible before the arrival of new technologies (Todoli-Signes, 2017). Furthermore, it is the digital platform itself and the triangular relationship between the worker, the end-user and the digital intermediary which is said to complicate the task of labour regulation and which raises key questions over the scope of minimum standards and remedies in the realm of irregular digitally mediated work (Stewart & Stanford, 2017). Such concerns over the potential for exploitation are exacerbated by the concentration of these new on-demand business models in 'unskilled' and 'semi-skilled' sections of the labour market where the bargaining power of workers is said to be limited (Minter, 2017). Indeed, whilst, by technicality, a gig worker can be either an employee or a freelancer, it is largely due to concerns over the (mis)classification of these workers as self-employed and the application of commercial rather than employment legislation, that the gig economy has found itself at the centre of debates related to the commoditisation of labour. To this end,

several investigations have been announced by various governmental bodies concerned with the wider social implications of such changes in the nature of work and the potential impact of a 'race-to-the-bottom' in terms of labour costs and standards (De Stefano, 2015). The recent surge in gig work has raised concerns that the foundation of economic and social security in the UK is being undermined, with a growing proportion of the working population finding themselves excluded from the provision of basic social rights and protections (Lewchuk, 2017).

However, legal classification represents just one aspect of job quality in the gig economy. Whilst important in relation to issues of social and economic security such as sick pay and welfare, the re-classification of employment status is limited in its potential to transform the workers experience of work in contemporary society (Balaram, et al., 2017). Indeed, whilst a reclassification of gig workers employment status may provide access to such things as holiday pay and pension rights, it will have little influence or control over whether the work is 'good' in other ways that matter, for example, in relation to whether the work is meaningful or colleagues are supportive. In addition, legal re-classification remains a controversial issue with some workers expressing concern over the perceived loss of autonomy associated with a change in employment status (Broughton, et al., 2018). Thus, prior to considering any specific legal or political reform, it is first necessary to find out more about the nature and quality of gig work. To this end, the following section will discuss the findings of a number of current studies exploring the phenomena of gig work.

3.4 The Growth and Size of the Gig Economy

Whilst the gig economy has dominated headlines in recent years, research into the size and characteristics of the gig economy workforce remains in its infancy. With a lack of official statistics on gig work and with mounting concerns as to the implications of the growth in the gig economy, a number of studies have used different methodologies in order to determine the size of the gig economy and to provide a more detailed view of the demographics of those undertaking gig work. However, the estimates from these studies have varied significantly with definitional disparities and the use of different methods making the evidence difficult to compare. For example, in a study published by JP Morgan Chase & Co, one of the first to focus more specifically on the digital platform economy in the United States, it was estimated that around 5 million people earned some form of income through these digital platforms between 2012-2015, equating to roughly 4% of the working population (Farrell & Greig, 2016). In contrast, a poll by Gallup which

adopted a broader definition of gig work estimated that as many as 57 million workers participated in the US gig economy, roughly 36% of workers (Gallup, 2018). Similar variations can also be found in data related to the size of the UK gig economy with estimates of the number of individuals undertaking gig work ranging between 1.1 million (Balaram, et al., 2017) to 4.9 million (Huws & Joyce, 2016)[6].

Despite these variations in the estimated size of the gig economy, there is growing consensus that the proportion of workers undertaking gig work continues to rise. For example, in a recent UK based study it was estimated that the gig economy had doubled in size between 2016-2019 with the number of UK workers undertaking gig work rising from 4.7% (approximately 2.7 million workers) to 9.6% (4.7 million) over the three year period (SSCU, 2019). This growth seems to be reinforced by statistics published by the ONS which indicated that the number of self-employed in the UK has risen by 180,000 in the period March 2018 - March 2019, reaching a record high of 4.93 million (ONS, 2019). This growth in the number of self-employed is said to be partly attributed to change in technology and the rise of the gig economy (ibid). In addition, with 1 in 4 young people indicating interest in such work (Balaram, et al., 2017), this number is expected to increase with gig work becoming the norm for many new entrants to the labour market. Indeed, the apparent rapid growth within the sector has led to predictions that the number of workers within the UK gig economy will soon outweigh the number of individuals working in the public sector (CMI, 2016).

Although the growth in the number of individuals undertaking gig work is largely undisputed, with the proportion of workers involved in gig work representing, on average, less than 10% of the working age population, it has been argued by some that the importance of gig work to overall employment is overstated within popular commentary (Stewart & Stanford, 2017). However, with evidence of a broader shift away from 'traditional' forms of employment to independent suppliers of service over the longer term (Walton, 2016) and with more individuals employed within this burgeoning sector than in other high profile industries including, for example, the coal and steel industries (Gayle, 2018), it is necessary to explore the dynamics of these new working relationships and the impact of the changing work environment on individuals opportunities for and experiences of employment in contemporary society.

[6] In a study by the DBEIS it was recognised that, in spite of variations, it could be said with 95% confidence that the corresponding value in the wider population lies between 3.2% and 6%.

3.5 Demographics of Gig Workers

As highlighted above, research into the scale and characteristics of the gig economy remains in its infancy with evidence from current studies proving to be convoluted as a result of definitional disparities. Indeed, whilst there are some patterns regarding the demographics of gig workers, these are also a number of discrepancies within current data due to differences in the way in which gig work is defined.

For example, current available analysis indicates that those undertaking gig work tend to be younger than traditional workers although there is evidence that older and retired workers also participate (Barnes, et al., 2015). Indeed, in one study undertaken by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy it was found that over half of those working in the gig economy were aged between 18-34 (Lepanjuuri, et al., 2018). Similarly, in a second study undertaken by the Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce it was found that gig workers were more likely to be between the ages of 16-30 than either employees or the self-employed with 86% of gig workers being under the age of 55 (Balaram, et al., 2017). These findings were also reflected in a study exploring the broader collaborative economy which suggested that those over the age of 65 were least likely to undertake task based work in the gig economy (Stokes, et al., 2014).

Similarly, despite the association between gig work and low skill jobs such as courier services, it was also found that gig workers educational attainment levels were largely consistent with that of the general population, with approximately 40% qualified at university level (Balaram, et al., 2017; Lepanjuuri, et al., 2018). Whilst this is likely a reflection of the proportion of professional gig work including, for example, consultancy or legal services provided through platforms such as *Upwork,* it is recognised that such findings may also reflect high levels of under-employment with such issues requiring further investigation.

However, whilst findings related to the age characteristics of gig workers appear largely consistent, figures related to the gender composition of the gig economy workforce vary widely. Indeed, estimates of female participation in the UK gig economy, which are largely based on small samples, have ranged between 25% (Balaram, et al., 2017) to as much as 59% (Huws, et al., 2017). These variations may be at least partially explained by the sectors being studied and that fact that men and women often participate in different types of platform-based work. For example, evidence indicates that whilst men are more

likely to participate through online labour-based platforms, women are more likely to participate through, for example, asset-based platforms where the gender split has been found to be more equal (Balaram, et al., 2017).

Divergent findings can also be found in considering issues of ethnicity. For example, in one study it was suggested that those from ethnic minority groups were one of the groups which were least likely to be active within the gig economy (Stokes, et al., 2014). However, this appears to be in direct conflict with findings from the Centre for European Policy Studies report which indicates that those from ethnic minorities make up the largest group of workers within the collaborative or sharing economy (De Groen, 2016).

Taken together, these conflicting findings indicate that the gig economy workforce is not a homogenous group with a need for further research in order to explore the differences in the needs and experiences of this population. The following section provides a brief overview of current evidence related to the quality of gig work.

3.6 Job Quality and Well-being in the Gig Economy

The emergence and continuing rise of the gig economy has brought with it a new set of opportunities and challenges for workers. Whilst some see gig work as providing opportunities for entrepreneurship and innovation whilst also allowing for flexibility at work and improved levels of work-life balance (Burtch, et al., 2018), others have labelled the gig economy a 'platform for exploitation' (Kessler, 2018) questioning the sustainability and fairness of working conditions. Indeed, it has been argued that the recent growth in platform based gig employment represents one of the most recent 'fissures' in the standard employment relationship which, in accordance with David Weil's (2014) notion of the Fissured Workplace, has contributed to expanding poverty, growing levels of precarity and an erosion of labour's bargaining power to secure improved working conditions (Flanagan, 2017).

To this end, concerns have been raised over the potential erosion of labour standards and employment regulation as a consequence of the use of 'bogus' contracting arrangements by gig economy platforms (Field & Forsey, 2017) which enable employers to disguise employment and avoid paying the necessary employer contributions and which deny individuals access to social benefits and workplace rights including holiday, sick pay and protection from unfair dismissal. The piece rate payment system commonly adopted by platforms within the gig economy has also raised serious concerns over the welfare of these workers with reports of workers earning less than £2.50 per hour (Davies & Butler,

2017), significantly below the Living Wage[7]. To this end, media reports on individual's experiences of working in the gig economy commonly suggest that many individuals working this way struggle to make ends meet, often earning less than the minimum wage whilst also bearing high levels of financial and personal risk (O'Connor, 2017). Concerns have also been raised over the impact of intrusive surveillance and non-consensual data collection (Funnell, 2016 as cited by, Healy, et al., 2017) and the safety of gig workers with evidence that gig economy and casual workers report receiving fewer protections for their health and well-being at work than their full-time counterparts (IOSH, 2017).

However, despite the high levels of public discourse surrounding the positives and negatives associated with this 'new' form of platform based work, a lack of empirical research and a failure within current research to distinguish between different forms of independent work (Lemmon, et al., 2016; Bergman & Jean, 2016) and a focus within current platform based research upon virtual or 'crowd work' (see for example Wood, et al., 2018; Graham, et al., 2017), means little is yet known about the impacts of gig working on the individual worker and how it may effect such things as worker well-being. In addition, much of the current limited evidence regarding individual's attitudes towards and experiences of gig work is found within the grey literature and is commonly based upon survey data, with few scholarly studies exploring the qualitative aspects of gig work.

The limited evidence currently available indicates that jobs within the local gig economy are of an inferior quality to permanent employment providing low wages, few social benefits and a lack of opportunities for career development. Indeed, in a recent report commissioned by the UK Trades Union Congress exploring the challenges and experiences for those in insecure forms of employment in the UK, evidence was provided of low wages and financial hardship with a growing fear of job insecurity deemed 'the scare of precarity' (Newsome et al., 2018). Whilst no specific analysis of gig work was undertaken, during interview and focus groups with London based workers operating for an undisclosed transport firm referred to as 'GigTaxi', reports were made of long working hours, increasing cost pressure, draconian performance management regimes and low rates of pay. In addition, in a study exploring the health implications of gig work, it was suggested that the exposure of gig workers to precarious conditions including a lack of benefits, a lack of job security and income volatility had a negative impact on the health of workers with increased levels of stress (Muntaner, 2018).

[7] At the time of writing, the national living wage for workers over the age of 25 is £8.72 per hour.

However, despite evidence of what can objectively be described as 'bad' job characteristics, it was found that the primary response given for undertaking gig work in the UK was based upon the perceived quality of work with over half of respondents in a largescale survey indicating that they viewed the work positively, citing 'good' conditions such as greater flexibility and decent pay (Balaram, et al., 2017). Similarly, despite concerns over the voluntary nature of this form of work and the exploitation of vulnerable workers, only 25% of respondents reported economic exclusion as a key motivating factor for engaging in gig work (ibid). This appears to support the evidence provided in a study by the Mackinsey Global Institute where it was suggested that independent workers could generally be divided into four key categories: the 'free agents' who purposefully chose to work independently and derive their primary source of income from it; the 'casual earners' who use independent work to supplement their primary source of income and who constitute the largest category of independent workers; the 'reluctants' who make a living mainly from independent work despite preferring more traditional forms of employment and; the 'financially strapped' who work independently out of necessity (MGI, 2016). Within the UK, the 'casual earners' constituted around 42% of the independent workforce with only 14% considering themselves 'financially strapped'. This was found to be one of the lowest reported levels of financially strapped independent workers in Europe, roughly 6% lower than France, Germany and Spain. In addition, whilst journalistic evidence points to the poor quality of gig work, a study sponsored by the European Parliament provided more mixed results with evidence of higher levels of satisfaction with such things as the work itself, task variety and flexibility despite the lower levels of satisfaction related to other aspects of gig work including career prospects, pay levels and job security (Forde, et al., 2017).

Furthermore, in a study published by the DBEIS it was also found that, whilst experiences of work in the gig economy were variable with those relying upon gig work as a primary source of income vulnerable to fluctuations in the amount of work available, the majority of respondents seemed unquestioning of this flexible working life where income is derived from a variety of sources (Broughton, et al., 2018). In addition, in contrast to media reports, the majority of respondents considered themselves to be self-employed and expressed little desire our expectation for a more stable working environment considering the trade-off between flexibility and security to be fair (ibid). To this end, whilst some workers felt a degree of deprivation in regard of essential employment rights, this was found not extend to social rights such as education or benefits with evidence that

platform workers felt neither insecure nor stressed about their employment status (Forde, et al., 2017). In addition, despite concerns over short-termism with evidence of a limited ability to save, a large proportion of respondents reported being content with their working lives with no expectation that it should be any different, indicating a potential change in attitudes towards work for some groups in the UK (Broughton, et al., 2018).

3.7 Conclusions

The aim of this chapter was to define what is meant by the gig economy and review current evidence related to the nature and quality of gig work in order to establish the state of current knowledge and identify issues in need of further exploration/paint a picture of gig work. The changes in the nature of work discussed in Chapter 2 including, for example, the rapid spread in the use of internet enabled, mobile, digital devices; increasing levels of international competition and; the shift to service based industries, can be said to have pathed the way for the new gig economy, generating new forms of on-demand consumption and giving rise to new 'flexible' working arrangements. However, despite the rapid growth in gig working and increasing levels of interest, research on the quality of work within the gig economy remains in its infancy with evidence from current studies limited in its usefulness as a result of definitional disparities in the conceptualisation of gig work and a reliance upon official survey data which has, thus far, failed to delineate this segment of the workforce from the broader category of independent workers. In addition, the studies which have been undertaken indicate that, despite evidence of poor quality work in relation to such things as job security, career prospects and wages, the majority of workers voluntarily chose to engage in gig work with high levels of satisfaction amongst gig workers particularly related to the flexibility associated with working this way. This paradoxical evidence raises a number of questions as to whether gig work is in fact good or bad work as well as how workers evaluate their jobs and to what extent these subjective assessments and the characteristics of gig work, remain consistent with traditional conceptualisations of job quality. In order to explore these key issues further, it is necessary to first establish what a 'good' job is. As such, the following chapter discusses literature related to job quality and good work to help build a theoretical framework to further explore the quality of gig work.

Chapter 4 - Theories of Job Quality

4.0 Introduction

So far, the discussion has focused upon defining the context for the study and current knowledge regarding workers experiences of working in the gig economy (Chapter 2 and Chapter 3). This chapter builds on Chapters 2 and 3 by focusing on developing a theoretical framework to help make sense of and better understand gig worker experiences within light of current debates regarding job quality. As such, the aim of this chapter is to consider what a good or a bad job is, identifying the key work-related factors indicative of the quality of work in order to provide a theoretical framework for the investigation into the quality of work experience within the gig economy. To achieve this aim, the chapter begins with a discussion of different theoretical perspectives on job quality and the ways in which the concept has been measured and defined within the literature, drawing on historical and contemporary theories of good or bad work in order to examine the evolution of the concept over time. Different approaches in the conceptualisation of good work are compared in order to highlight the similarities and differences in approaches taken and to establish the state of contemporary scholarship. In addition, key work-related factors consistently associated with job quality within the literature, will be identified and discussed in order to provide a conceptual framework which will inform the investigation into the quality of work experience in the gig economy.

4.1 The Concept of Job Quality: A Historical Perspective

The concept of 'job quality' or 'good work' is a social and political cause which is said to have arisen in response to the evolution of democratic societies and the establishment of basic human rights (Grote & Guest, 2017, p. 1). Whilst early improvements in the quality of work can be associated with certain limited welfare reforms, the foundations for the contemporary concept are said to have arisen in response to the increased awareness of the impact of employee attitudes and behaviours on organisational productivity (Walton, 1973).

Historically, the design and organisation of work was largely based upon labour efficiency and productivity, with little consideration given to the satisfaction or motivation of the worker beyond the payment of wages (Robertson & Cooper, 2011). Indeed, in Fredrick Taylor's seminal piece of the Principles of Scientific Management

(1911) it was put forward that workers do not enjoy work and thus the design and organisation of work should be based around principles of simplification, standardisation and control over the labour process in order to enhance labour efficiency, with the use of financial incentives to motivate workers and maximise productivity (Robertson & Cooper, 2011). These methods were widely adopted as organisations recognised the benefits of increased productivity levels and lower unit costs, with the most notable advocate, Henry Ford, using these methods in the design of his first production line (Janoski & Lepadatu, 2014). However, the mechanistic approach to job design promoted under Scientific Management and the view that workers were primarily motived by monetary gain has since faced significant criticism for offering an 'overly simplistic' and idealistic view of the nature of the exchange which 'dehumanizes' the worker (Greer, 2016). In Elton Mayo's study at the Hawthorne plant between 1924-32 it was found that, as opposed to being motivated by monetary gain or environmental factors such as lighting, workers motivation was influenced more greatly by relational factors such as attention and social relationships at work (Roethlisberger & Dickson, 1939). It is often this study which is cited as having started the human relations movement and the move towards 'humanizing' employees working conditions, emphasising, for example, the role of social processes and the sense of belonging in motivation, over and above aspects of financial gain (Dubin, 2017).

With growing recognition of the impact of the conditions of employment on the attitudes and behaviours of workers, distinguishing between job work related factors which caused pain and distress and those which contribute to positive outcomes such as satisfaction and well-being, drew increasing academic attention (Sauchau, 2007). As such, job design took a departure from Taylorism, re-defining good work and approaches to job design which placed the individual at the heart of the process in order to "create work that achieves high work productivity without incurring the human costs associated with traditional approaches" (Oldham & Hackman, 1980, p. 52). An example of one such model is Hackman and Oldham's (1976) 'job characteristics model'. This model, building upon the earlier work of Maslow and Herzberg, identified five key characteristics associated with 'satisfying work' including; skill variety, task significance, autonomy and feedback from the job (Hackman & Oldham, 1976). According to this model, it is these work-related factors which influence worker's psychological health thus having a consequential impact on motivations, satisfaction and performance (Robertson & Cooper, 2011). It is these 'need-based theories' and the concept of 'satisfying work' which can be said to

underpin a number of contemporary models of job quality, focusing on the influence of work-related factors on personal well-being and job satisfaction, in defining what makes a good job.

4.2 Trends in Job Quality

As highlighted in the introduction, whilst the concept of 'good work' is relatively recent, reference to issues of job quality can be traced back to the nineteenth century and the early works of Karl Marx (1844) who put forward the notion that, due to the employer's ownership and control over the means of production in capitalist society, the quality of work is eroded, with workers becoming increasingly 'alienated' from the act of production (Giddens, 1997). A similar view over the 'degradation' of work in industrial society as a consequence of developments in work organisation and, in particular, the spread of Tayloristic principles and the simplification of tasks can also be seen in Braverman's seminal piece; *Labour and Monopoly Capital* (1974). Indeed, throughout the twentieth century a broad range of theoretical debates have arisen based on assumptions as to causes and consequences of job quality including theories of motivation, organisational performance and social stratification (Kalleberg & Vaissy, 2005). More generally, there are said to be two main theoretical positions in the development of job quality, each of which with significantly different predictions in relation to trends in the quality of work and levels of employee well-being; the Neo-Fordist and the Post-Fordist perspectives (Handel, 2005). In accordance with the former perspective, the recent growth in the service sector, the adoption of 'lean' organisational strategies and the reduction in trade union presence, are all seen as having contributed to a decline in job quality with 'bad jobs' - characterised by low wages, job insecurity and a lack of promotional opportunity - now representing a structural feature of the labour market (Dahl, et al., 2009). By contrast, the post-Fordists argue that the quality of jobs has actually improved with organisational and technological changes, such as the spread of information communication technology and the adoption of new work arrangements, contributing to greater employee involvement, task variety and greater levels of job autonomy (Handel, 2005).

In addition to the division in perspectives as to the impact of changes in the nature of work on the quality of jobs in contemporary society, notions as to how such issues should be addressed within policy have also been a source of contention at a political level. Whilst policies designed to improve job quality emerged as early as the 1960s in Europe, throughout the 1980s and 1990s job quantity dominated the political agenda with a focus

on job creation and reducing unemployment (Dahl, et al., 2009). Indeed, throughout this time period and in response to a number of economic shocks, successive UK governments enacted a range of neo-liberal deregulatory policies designed to stimulate a market orientated economy and which consequently resulted in a decline in labour power and the ability of workers to influence the employment conditions to which they were subject (Peters, 2008). However, during the formulation of the Lisbon Treaty in early 2000 it appeared the political rhetoric around employment had begun to change and job quality was promoted to become one of the European Commission's central objectives placed at the heart of the European Employment Strategy. Indeed, it was suggested that through the creation of, not only more, but 'better' jobs, workers would be more motivated, productive and committed thus contributing to improved levels of competitiveness and higher levels of economic growth (Devoine, et al., 2008).

Despite such initiatives and the growing body of evidence as to the benefits of improvements in job quality, evidence would suggest that the overall quality of employment in the United Kingdom has declined along more dimensions than it has improved, with evidence of a long-term stagnation of wages (Khan, 2016), growing levels of in-work poverty (Tinson, et al., 2016) and increasingly precarious employment conditions (Booth, 2016). However, despite concerns over this apparent decline in job quality, the research exploring how these issues effect the individual workers quality of work experience, remains largely underdeveloped (Findlay, et al., 2013). This may be partly attributed to the fragmentation of job quality theory; a concept characterised by a series of contentious academic debates related to the central tenets of what makes a job good or bad (Kalleberg, 2016). As such and in order to inform the investigation into job quality in the gig economy, it is first necessary to determine what a good job is and how the quality of work is assessed. To this end, the following section will provide an overview of some of the core debates related to the definition and measurement of job quality and the extent to which these have contributed to the evolution of the concept.

4.3 Defining and Measuring Job Quality

Extensive literature in sociology, psychology and economics has demonstrated that the quality of a person's work has significant consequences for an individual's social, psychological and economic well-being (Kalleberg & Vaissy, 2005). However, in spite of the significant legacy of research dedicated to issues of job quality and the recent resurgence of interest in the concept of the quality of working life, not only on the political agenda, but in both sociological and economic studies of work, there remains little

consensus over a specific definition of job quality or in what is said to constitute a good job (Findlay, et al., 2013; Kalleberg, 2016). This has resulted in a range of different approaches to the study and measurement of job quality.

One of the key debates found within the job quality literature relates to the focus upon the objective versus subjective nature of job quality (Royuela, et al., 2008). The subjectivist approach defines job quality as the extent to which a job can be said to satisfy employee preference's whilst the objectivist approach defines job quality as the extent to which a job can be said to have features which promote beneficial outcomes for the employee (Holman & Mclelland, 2011). Whilst the former approach is based upon the assumption that individual workers have preferences over different job features and thus measures job quality in accordance with subjective responses and the extent to which these preferences are satisfied, the latter perspective considers a high-quality job as having objectively different features and as producing different outcomes, than a lower quality job (Warr, 2007). Thus, objectivists restrict their analysis to the objectively measurable characteristics of the job, such as pay, in order to obtain a measure of job quality which is independent of individual circumstance (Munoz de Bustillo, et al., 2011).

During the early part of the twentieth century, the objectivist approach was largely dominant with the quality of a job often evaluated in accordance with the provision of capabilities to meet a broad range of work-related needs (Elizur & Shye, 1990). In accordance with the objectivist perspective, the extrinsic characteristics of work, such as pay, working hours and contractual job security, were seen as having the greatest influence on employee's experience of work with high levels of generalisability in the way that these conditions affected employees (Holman & Mclelland, 2011). However, whilst this approach allows for comparisons between different types of employment, it takes a paternalistic approach and does not provide a means of establishing which job features are more important than others and which therefore make a greater contribution to job quality (Kalleberg & Vaissy, 2005). In addition, this approach has faced growing criticism for seeing a job as 'neutral' and ignoring worker characteristics such as gender, race and class (Kalleberg, 2011; Warhurst, et al., 2017).

In response to the psychological needs-based theories emerging during the 1950s, the listing of objective criteria increasingly gave way to job satisfaction as the target assessment criterion (Martel & Dupuis, 2006). Indeed, the definitions of QWL most frequently referenced throughout the late 1980s revealed a marked trend towards an

increasingly subjective conceptualisation of QWL. An example of this is provided in the following definition provided by Kiernan and Knutson (1990),

"[Quality of work] means something different to each and every individual and is likely to vary according to their age, career stage and/or position in the industry" (p.102).

In contrast with the objective approach which focuses on the measurement of job quality against a pre-determined set of job quality criteria, the subjective approach focuses upon the extent to which a job fulfils employee's individual needs and preferences. As such, job quality is based entirely upon an individual's subjective evaluation of their job with the implication being that if the individual is satisfied with their job, it must be a high quality one (Clark, 2011). In accordance with this perspective, job satisfaction is generally considered to be synonymous with job quality (Clark & Oswald, 1996).

However, whilst the subjectivist approach addresses issues related to the measurement of every aspect of a job, it has been criticised for failing to account for the fact that employees have objectively different work and employment conditions and that these shape employee outcomes (e.g. individual well-being) over and above personal preferences (Parker & Wall, 1999). In addition, it has been argued that levels of job satisfaction are likely to be influenced by factors other than fulfilment (e.g. individual differences) thus making it unlikely that job satisfaction could be considered entirely synonymous with the quality of a job (Munoz de Bustillo, et al., 2011).

Whilst the distinction between the two approaches remains important, it is not dichotomous with increasing support for the inclusion of both objective and subjective assessments of job quality (Knox, et al., 2015). Indeed, several authors have highlighted the need for a multidimensional approach to job quality which recognises the fact that there are 'objective' characteristics of employment which influence the individuals experience of work through their impact on employee-wellbeing (such as pay), whilst also accommodating for the fact that individual worker preferences and personal circumstances, will affect the impacts and outcomes of these job characteristics (Dahl, et al., 2009; Holman, 2013; Jones, et al., 2016; Kalleberg, 2016). Thus, an increasingly common approach suggested in order to bridge the two positions involves identifying the key elements which contribute to job quality through their impact on well-being, and drawing upon subjective perceptions as a means of capturing the crucial level of personal experience and to provide a path for additional evidence (Boulin, et al., 2007). It is this multidimensional approach, known also as the job characteristics or checklist approach,

which will be utilised within this study in order to allow for comparisons in and between occupations, whilst also recognising that workers perceptions of job quality are likely to be influenced by individual characteristics and preferenes (Knox, et al., 2015).

A summary of the checklist approach, and some of its benefits and limitations, are outlined in Table 4.1 alongside the three other most common approaches used in the measurement and monitoring of job quality including: the minimum standards approach, the second-tier standards approach and the job quality index.

Four Approaches	Process	Examples	Benefits and Limitations
Minimum Standards Approach	Specifying all jobs should satisfy certain prescribed standards.	International Labour Organisations Decent Work Agenda.	Aims to identify the basic standards that all jobs should meet and can be used to inform national and international policy interventions. Useful for determining 'bad jobs' but fails to provide insights into factors that determine quality of employment from a worker perspective. Implies some pre-existing, objective process for establishing the 'standard'.
Second-Tier Standards Approach	Identify the attributes above the core labour standards that a 'good' job should possess.	European Foundation for Improvement of Living and Working Conditions.	Same as above however, goes beyond 'minimum standards' in evaluating the quality of a job. Has been criticised for overlooking the influence of workers perceptions and expectations on workers experiences and perceptions of their job. Selection of what constitutes a standard or important aspect of job quality is often ad hoc.
The Job Quality Index Approach	Development of an index of job quality.	The DGB Index, The European Job Quality Index.	Aims to develop a set of objective, statistical indicators in order to inform national and international policy interventions. Allows for international comparisons of job quality using aggregate statistics however, in the absence of unambiguous data relating to job quality components such as autonomy or relationships, such job characteristics are often excluded from these studies. Determining the weighting of job quality components is also highly problematic and often arbitrary.
The Job Characteristics Approach	Identifying elements of job quality and examining these elements against jobs.	(Walton, 1973; Horowitz, 2016; Lewchuk, 2017)	This approach can address the weakness of the prior approaches by unravelling workers perspectives and experiences in relation to each job quality component revealing what factors impact the quality of a job from a worker's perspective. In this approach employees' personal experiences are used to identify which factors impact the overall quality of a job. The benefit of this approach is that it allows for comparisons of different jobs and changes over time. The weakness of this approach is that its specificity and subjectivity limit its generalizability.

Table 4.1 – Approaches Used in the Measurement and Monitoring of Job Quality

Source: Adapted from (Hannif, et al., 2008).

In congruence with the job characteristic approach, it is necessary to consider the key work-related factors which contribute to job quality. Whilst a comprehensive review of the job quality literature and the creation of a definitive list of job quality components is beyond the scope of this thesis, the following section provides an overview of the outcomes of good work before going on to consider, in Section 4.5, the work-related factors that affect job quality and its outcomes.

4.4 The Outcomes of Job Quality

Whilst there remains divergence within the literature as to the best way to capture and measure job quality, there is general consensus that the relevance of job quality arises from its impact, whether on the employer, the company, the individual or broader society. To describe a job as good is only meaningful if it provides a better outcome than a poor-quality job. To this end, job quality can be defined as,

'the extent to which a job has work and employment related factors that foster beneficial outcomes for the employee, particularly psychological well-being, physical well-being and positive attitudes such as job satisfaction' (Green, 2006 as cited in Holman, 2013, p.476).

Whilst an in-depth discussion of the outcomes of job quality is outwith the scope of this thesis, the following section provides a brief overview of the most commonly referenced individual level outcomes of 'good work' in order to highlight the importance of job quality and provide an indication of the positive and negative outcomes associated with good and bad work.

4.4.1 Psychological and Subjective Well-being

In accordance with the classical economics perspective of labour, historically, objective measures of well-being, and in particular income-based economic welfare, have provided the main focus in consideration of work related well-being (Robertson & Cooper, 2011). However, with growing recognition of the 'human' element of labour and the weakness of gross domestic product as an indicator of economic performance and social progression (Stiglitz, et al., 2009), subjective measures of well-being attracted increasing interest from policymakers seeking an alternative and more sustainable, economic model (Angner, 2010). Indeed, whilst it is generally agreed upon that there are strong connections between economic prosperity and subjective or psychological well-being, there is evidence that, beyond a certain point of economic prosperity, subjective well-being begins to stagnate (Hansen, 2015). As such, psychological well-being or 'happiness' is increasingly used as

a measure of utility in economics and features centrally in the 'happy-productive worker' hypothesis (Piekalkiewicz, 2017).

Psychological well-being is a term used interchangeably with that of 'happiness', 'life satisfaction' or 'subjective well-being' and is generally measured in accordance with such questions as 'taking all things together, how would you say things are these days – would you say you were very happy, pretty happy or not to happy?' (Gurin, et al., 1960). Psychological and subjective well-being can be defined as 'personal well-being comprising hedonic aspects of well-being such as pleasure, comfort and positive emotions, and eudemonic aspects such as meaning in life, feelings of vitality, intrinsic self-realization, personal flourishing and social relations' (Hansen, 2015, p. 176). This is similar to the definition of 'happiness' provided by Warr (2007) who describes 'happiness' as a combination of self-validation (similar to eudemonic aspects described above) achieved through tackling adversity and pursuing personal goals and subjective well-being, defined in relation to feeling 'good' or 'bad' (similar to hedonic aspects described above). Thus, both psychological well-being and happiness can be said to be based upon the dimensions of pleasure in relation to positive feelings and positive attitudes, and virtue in relation to meaningfulness, self-realisation and becoming the best one can be (Huta, 2015).

There is general consensus within the literature that work can increase psychological well-being or happiness through its direct impact on the 'quality of life domains' which include such things as; physical and psychological health, independence, social relationships, environmental concerns and personal beliefs (WHO, 1997; Green, 2006; Kalleberg, 2011). Workers with higher levels of subjective or psychological well-being are said to be more engaged in their work, show better organisational citizenship, earn more and have better relationships with colleagues (George & Brief, 1992). Whilst, historically studies connecting job quality and psychological well-being have tended to focus on one job characteristic such as monetary compensation (Clark & Knabe, 2010) or job security (Schnittker, 2008), in a recent study by Horowitz (2016) evidence was provided of the impact of five core job quality dimensions on subjective well-being including; job security, monetary compensation, task discretion, work intensity and safe working conditions. It was found that whilst the impact of some job quality dimensions on psychological well-being (such as monetary compensation or task discretion) may be mitigated by things such as social life, leisure time, and class identification, two job quality dimensions, job insecurity and safe working conditions, could not be mediated

(Horowitz, 2016). Thus, whilst it is recognised that happiness can come from sources other than work (Schumacher, 1980; Helliwell, et al., 2012) job quality continues to have a significant influence, both directly and indirectly, on an individual's overall levels of life satisfaction or psychological well-being.

4.4.2 Physical Well-being and Health

An alternative perspective on job quality which features as both a dimension and outcome of the quality of work (e.g. Clark, 2005) relates to the impact of work on the physical well-being or 'health' of workers (Guest, 2008). Health, as defined by the World Health Organisation is, "a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity" (WHO, 1948, para. 1). This broad definition recognises that physical well-being and work-related health is not limited in scope simply to the presence or absence of some objectively defined physical or mental illness. However, with the latter outcomes and the presence of a physical or mental illness, arguably the easiest to measure, they are generally afforded most attention within the job quality literature.

Much of the evidence related to the positive impact of work on health is drawn from evidence of the negative health effects of unemployment. Unemployment has been linked to higher mortality rates and a variety of life-threatening illnesses including cirrhosis, cardiovascular disease and suicide (Brenner, 1973). In addition, with unemployment providing a source of financial, social and emotional stress, there is a general consensus that work is good for health (Gagin & Shinan-Atlman, 2012; Kalleberg, et al., 2000). In a recent report, it was found the activity of work provided a range of health-related benefits which outweighed the risks of, and could even reverse, adverse health effects of unemployment (Waddell & Burton, 2006). However, it was recognised that such positive health benefits arising from work remain dependent on the nature and quality of work within its social context and the need for jobs to be 'safe and accommodating' (Waddell & Burton, 2006). Thus, whilst work in its broadest sense, can be said to be good for health, this must be met with a caveat in relation to the quality of jobs with the potential for job factors to have adverse effects on the physical, mental and psychological health of the individual. An example of this can be seen in consideration of autonomy; the lower the perceptions of employees over the control they have over their work, the less likely they are to take sick leave when needed, prejudicing their overall health (Gash, et al., 2007). As such, it is not simply employment which matters for health, but the nature, design, organisation and conditions of work arising through employment.

However, whilst a number of prior studies have focused on the adverse effects work can have on the health of individuals, it is recognised that work can have an equally positive effect on physical and mental health with evidence of the significance of work as a source of identity and a means of serving society and contributing to the development of democratic communities (Budd, 2011) as well as in its contribution to psychological well-being as discussed above. In addition, with the cost of sickness absence running into the £10bns (TUC, 2010) the mutual organisational and societal benefits provided through improving levels of worker health, require little elaboration. Thus, rather than simply associating good work with work which does not have adverse effects on the health and well-being of the individual, it is argued that a good job is one which can also be said to have a positive impact on health (Jones, et al., 2016).

4.4.3 Job Satisfaction

As highlighted in section 4.3, one of the ways in which the academic literature first approached the question of what makes a good job, was by focusing on the individual's evaluation of their job (Burchell, et al., 2014). Job satisfaction is said to be a central part of the quality of life and has been held by some to be 'an end in itself' (Wnuk-Lipinski, 1977). Job satisfaction can be defined as, 'a psychological state represented by cognitive and affective indicators resulting from the evaluation of one's job experiences' (Venkataramani, et al., 2013). Thus, job satisfaction, in a similar way to SWB, relies on a subjective interpretation of the individual's experiences of work and is generally measured in accordance with the extent that one feels 'satisfied' or 'dissatisfied' with their work (Warr, 2007). Job satisfaction is particularly pertinent in consideration of job quality due to the ability to explore which job characteristics have the greatest influence on the individual's perceptions of their job as good or bad (Rose, 2003).

However, the validity of using job satisfaction as on overall proxy for job quality and the assumption that a job which satisfies an individual is one which is good for them, is widely debated within the literature. For example, it has been argued that job satisfaction is an ineffective measure of job quality due to its limitations in its application alongside objective measurements of job quality such as monetary compensation or job security (Schoekkaert, et al., 2009). In addition, it has been argued that job satisfaction represents an unsuitable proxy for comparative studies of job quality, due to the ability for individuals to adapt to unfavourable preferences, undermining their ability to evaluate job characteristics effectively (Burchell, et al., 2014). Thus, it has been argued that job satisfaction is a much narrower concept than job quality, representing one of many

possible outcomes of good work (Sirgy, et al., 2001). Despite these concerns, it is generally accepted that high levels of worker satisfaction has positive implications for the individual, such as improved health (Karasek, 1979; Tsutsumi, 2005), whilst also contributing to organisational outcomes such as lower absenteeism, greater rates of retention and improved productivity (Schlieker, et al., 2004; Harter, et al., 2002). As such and as is highlighted above, job satisfaction remains a key outcome of job quality at both the organisational and individual levels reinforcing the importance of exploring workers subjective understandings and perceptions of their work in examining the quality of jobs.

4.4.4 Work-life Balance

The issue of work-life balance (WLB) can be said to be somewhat new to the discussion of the quality of work, again arising through the 'quality of life' studies, integrating outcomes related to satisfaction with non-work life domains. With individuals spending an increasing proportion of their lives working, work-life balance and the ability for individuals to balance their home and work lives, is said to have developed as a key outcome of a 'good job' contributing to overall levels of personal well-being and an improved quality of life (Drobnic & Gullen, 2011). The amount of leisure or family time an individual has is said to be important to overall levels of well-being due to the satisfaction it brings and its association with improved psychological and subjective well-being (Macrory, 2016). In addition, WLB has attracted growing interest from policy makers with fears that changes in the world of work, such as the introduction of digital technology and the rise of the 'on-demand' economy discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, are resulting in growing levels of imbalance and the gradual deterioration of life domains outside of work such as community and family life/relationships (Guest, 2002). With individuals experiencing increasing 'time pressure' resulting in less time available for 'quality family time' or 'down time', the feeling that work is interfering with non-work related obligations and interests is said to have increased, contributing to the general perception that the quality of work is deteriorating for European workers (Drobnic & Gullen, 2011), in spite of evidence of objectively beneficial trends such as the general reduction in working hours and the decline in manual work.

The concept of work-life balance, whilst traditionally being associated with the balance between work and family life, has since been extended to encompass further life domains, recognising that even where an individual does not have childcare responsibilities, they remain subject to the pressures of balancing work and non-work roles (Goode, 1960). Indeed, with a finite number of resources (such as time and energy) to be divided between

multiple roles, conflict and dissatisfaction is said to arise where individuals do not have enough resources to perform their different roles (Schieman, et al., 2009). As such, a balance between work and non-work activities is central to the workers quality of life and in reducing the negative effects of role strain.

Drawing on the resources-demand model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007), it is argued that work related demands (such as excessive working hours and job insecurity) are seen as having a negative impact on work-life balance whilst work-related resources (such as training and skills development) can assist in the performance of multiple roles thus having a positive impact on WLB. The notion of what is an appropriate 'balance' remains highly subjective with WLB frequently portrayed as a 'perceptual phenomenon', varying between individuals and circumstances and often changing over time depending on the salience of the competing demands (Drobnic & Gullen, 2011). Thus, due to the difficulties in developing an objective measure of work-life balance, scholars have increasingly turned their attention to satisfaction with work-life balance and the individual's assessment of their ability to effectively balance work and non-work roles (Valcour, 2007). Thus, in consideration of job quality it is not simply objective measurements of working hours which impact work-life balance but it is the extent to which the individual perceives this as having a positive or negative impact on their ability to balance their work and non-work roles.

The importance of work-life balance as an outcome of job quality is said to increase as the economic prosperity of the country increases. For example, in economically prosperous countries where other aspects of work, such as security of employment and wage levels, are largely controlled, the successful reconciliation of work and non-work roles is likely to become increasingly prominent in relation to the life satisfaction of the individual (Drobnic, et al., 2010). In addition, with evidence of generational differences in work values and attitudes and the increase, amongst the younger generation, of extrinsic and leisure values, paralleled by a steady decline in the centrality of work to personal identity amongst the same group (Twenge, et al., 2010), work-life balance can be said to represent an increasingly important outcome of good work.

Having considered the overall outcomes of good work, the following section provides an overview of the dimensions of job quality, identified as such due to their influence upon these outcomes.

4.5 Dimensions of Job Quality

The review of the literature thus far has explored the concept of job quality and how it is defined and measured as well as how the concept has evolved over time and the outcomes of job quality. The next section focuses upon the work-related factors commonly included as dimensions of job quality as a result of their impact upon the individual outcomes discussed in Section 4.4. It is these components of job quality which will be used to inform the framework for this studies exploration of job quality within the gig economy.

The dimensions of good work and the importance attached to each of the job components or the extent to which one component is considered to have a greater influence on job quality than another, has been the subject of considerable debate. Whereas economists have tended to focus on aspects of economic compensation such as wages and fringe benefits in evaluating the quality or desirability of a job, (Jencks, et al., 1988), sociologists have instead focused upon issues of occupational status and the skill level associated with a job (Green, 2006) and psychologists have tended to emphasise non-economic aspects of a job such as the meaningfulness of work and the various sources of job satisfaction (Kalleberg & Vaissy, 2005). However, whilst there remains divergence within the literature as to the specific indicators of job quality, it is increasingly recognised within contemporary scholarship that each of these perspectives provides only a partial view with a need to adopt a multidimensional approach in the measurement of job quality which accounts for both economic and non-economic sources of variation (Dahl, et al., 2009).

Whilst there is no consensus as to a single set of variables which can be used indisputably, to describe a good job, a number of consistencies can be identified in the dimensions featured within models of job quality across both the academic and institutional literature. For example, most models of job quality use some combination of the following factors; monetary compensation; opportunities for advancement and personal development; job security and stability; individual task discretion; work intensity; safe working conditions and; working hours/patterns of work (Kalleberg, 2016). These factors are frequently referenced in the measurement of job quality due to the bounty of evidence that they promote employee well-being and job satisfaction (Holman, 2013).

However, these characteristics represent only some of the most commonly referenced components of job quality with significant variations in the work-related factors included

within different models of job quality (see for example, table A.1 in Appendix A1). This lack of consensus over the work-related factors included within models of job quality has contributed to a lack of convergence within the literature and an absence of consistent foundations for future research. This failure to come to a common understanding over key aspects of job quality and the diffuse nature of theoretical conceptualisations, is said to have limited the overall impact that concepts of 'quality employment' or 'good work' have had on both research and public policy (Burchell, et al., 2014).

In order to bring together a largely disparate body of literature and provide a model of job quality which could serve as a theoretical basis for the construction of a European job quality indicator, Munoz de Bustillo et al (2011) conducted a review of more than 20 existing job quality indices. On the basis of this review, a framework was developed including the most commonly cited work-related factors identified within the literature and included as indicators of job quality due to evidence of their impact upon the outcomes of job quality including well-being and job satisfaction. These included; wages and social benefits; job content (including the pace of work and meaningfulness); work autonomy; job security (type of contract and stability); training (formal and on the job); opportunities for advancement; safe working environment (physical work conditions and work-related risks); working hours (including distribution of working hours); social working environment and; participation.[8].

Due to the worker-orientated nature of this framework and the restriction of job attributes to those associated with positive outcomes for the worker (omitting attributes such as productivity which do not directly relate to well-being), it is these components of job quality which will provide the focus of the remainder of this chapter and which will be used inform the development of a conceptual framework for exploring the degree and variability of the quality of jobs in the gig economy. To this end, the following section will consider how each of these dimensions are defined and discussed within the literature in addition to providing a brief summary of evidence related to their association with the outcomes of job quality discussed in Section 4.4.

[8] Whilst 16 indicators are included in the proposal for a European Job Quality Indicator, those with significant overlap (such as on the job training and formal training) have been combined under one dimension for the purposes of this study in order to avoid repetition and aid with the overall structure of the discussion.

4.5.1 Wages and Social Benefits

One of the most frequently referenced single dimensions of job quality is that of wages or income (Green, 2006; Holman, 2013; Sengupta, et al., 2009; Kalleberg, et al., 2000; Clark, 2005). However, variations do exist in the way in which this attribute is defined and measured. Indeed, whilst some consider overall salary levels or pay rates per hour (Kalleberg, et al., 2000), others assess the way in which pay is perceived by the employee and the extent to which the pay received is fair or adequate compensation for the work undertaken (Grote & Guest, 2017). The importance placed on income as a key feature of work is widely evident within the literature underpinning theories of employee motivation and job satisfaction (Taylor, 1911; Lazear, 2000; Deckop & Mangel, 1999; Rynes, et al., 2004; Kalleberg & Vaissy, 2005). Low pay in particular, is frequently associated with poor quality work, not only in relation to the direct impact on quality of life and levels of wealth or poverty (Grzywacz & Dooley, 2003), but in relation to the 'clustering' of job quality characteristics with poorly paid jobs often found to be 'low quality' in accordance with other dimensions (Kalleberg & Vaissy, 2005; Ritter & Ankner, 2002). In addition, there is growing evidence of the impact of 'wage ranking' and contingent pay on the well-being and happiness of the worker (Brown, et al., 2008; Schnittker, 2008). For example, satisfaction and happiness are strongly influenced by perceptions of 'fairness' and the perceived match or mismatch between the level of effort put in by the employee and the rewards received (such as pay, security, control, self-esteem) (de Jonge, et al., 2000). However, not only is the focus on wages alone said to be limited in its failure to consider other facets of monetary compensation such as the way in which the wage is calculated (salaried, performance related or hourly) as well as the intervals between payments and access to overtime (Holman, 2013), it is widely recognised as being an incomplete measure in capturing the overall quality of a job (Horowitz, 2016). Indeed, whilst wages represent the main compensation for work, jobs might offer, or provide access to, a range of other social of fringe benefits which contribute to an individual's overall income (Munoz-Bustillo, et al., 2009). For example, individuals working in the sales sector may receive performance related bonuses whilst those working in the hospitality sector may benefit from gratuities which increase their overall income and thus enhance job quality. Similarly, those employed on a full time, permanent contact are provided access to social benefits such as holiday or sickness pay and thus arguably enjoy a higher level of job quality than those employed on a self-employed basis and who are not provided the same benefits.

The importance of pay to individuals has also been the subject of debate. For example, whilst some studies have found an association between pay levels and job satisfaction (Rose, 2003; Kalleberg & Vaissy, 2005), other studies have shown pay to be less important in its influence upon job satisfaction than other components of job quality such as security or the nature of work (Clark, 2005) with one study finding pay to be the second least important job feature for workers in the UK (Munoz de Bustillo & Fernandez-Macias, 2005).

However, in spite of debates over the importance of pay to individuals levels of job satisfaction, the impact of wage levels on an individual's standards of living and their ability to avoid poverty, as well as the impact of security of pay over access to credit and financial security, highlight the significance of monetary compensation for individual well-being and thus its importance as a dimension of job quality. Indeed, a number of studies within the health literature have reported an association between income and health arguing that income levels affect housing, diet and access to goods and services which, in turn, impact overall health (Ettner, 1996; Benzeval, et al., 2001; Ecob & Smith, 1999). There is also increasing evidence to suggest that simply being in paid employment is not enough to avoid poverty with evidence of an increasingly unequal distribution of wages and growing level of in-work poverty in the UK, particularly for those without skills or qualifications (McKnight, 2002). To this end, a recent study by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation found that a growing proportion of those living below the Minimum Income Standard (the standard which is considered by the public to be what is needed for a minimum acceptable living standard in the UK) in 2016/17, were households where there is full employment (e.g. where all adults are working full time) (Stone, et al., 2019). Similarly, a study by the Scottish Government found that 52% of working age adults in poverty in Scotland, which provides the context of the current study, were living in households where at least one adult was in full time employment (Scottish Government, 2015). Such evidence strongly supports the inclusion of wages as an important element in the measurement of job quality.

In consideration of gig work in particular, the piece rate payment system commonly used within this sector has raised serious concern with reports of workers earning less than £2.50 per hour (Davies & Butler, 2017). A further concern which is significant not only at an individual but at a societal level, is the apparent lack of access to in work benefits (Forde, et al., 2017), including the common exclusion of gig workers from automatic enrolment in workplace pension schemes (Broughton, et al., 2018). This raises a number

of concerns about the future of these workers and, in particular, how they will support themselves during periods of ill-health and after retirement with secondary concerns about the burden placed on public finances in attempting to support the older population. The extent to which such concerns are shared by those undertaking gig work and the impacts of specific payments systems used within the gig economy, will be explored as part of this study.

4.5.2 Job Content

Job content or the 'actual work' relates to the nature of the work/type of task being undertaken and is commonly concerned with the psychological aspects of the job as opposed to its mechanics (Clark, 2005). For example, job content is frequently measured against the extent to which the work is 'meaningful' (Munoz-Bustillo, et al., 2009), 'interesting' (Amibile, et al., 1994), 'self-fulfilling' (Karasek & Theorell, 1990), 'challenging' (Hackman & Oldham, 1976)' or 'monotonous' (Johansson, 1989). This can be contrasted with contextual job characteristics over which the worker often has little control such as wage levels, working conditions and company policies (Humphrey, et al., 2007). It has been argued that it is these 'intrinsic' characteristics of work or the job content, rather than the contextual/extrinsic factors, which are said to represent the primary sources of worker motivation and satisfaction (Bassett- Jones & Lloyd, 2005). Indeed, empirical research indicates meaningfulness is positively related to outcomes of job quality including job satisfaction and psychological well-being (Hackman & Oldham, 1976; Kahn, 1990; Steger & Dik, 2010). To this end, job content and the extent to which work is perceived as 'interesting' has been identified by British respondents as being one the most important aspects of a good job (Munoz-Bustillo, et al., 2009; Clark, 2001) thereby highlighting its importance as a key attribute of job quality. Similarly, monotony at work has been associated with negative health outcomes including psychological distress and high blood pressure (Melamed, et al., 1995).

With gig work posited by some as being an alternative to 'boring' jobs in the traditional workspace (Shibata, 2019), the extent to which those working in the gig economy consider their job to be interesting or meaningful represents another key area of interest.

4.5.2.1 Pace of Work and Workload

One of the most recent debates relating to job content and job quality concerns the extent to which work can be said to have 'intensified' (Kelliher & Anderson, 2010). Indeed, work intensity has become an increasingly prominent dimension of job quality with

concerns that changes in the external environment such as the rapid acceleration of technological change, and changes in management styles such as the introduction of high performance work practices, have resulted in the increasing intensification of work (Green, 2006; Vidal, 2013). Such concerns are nothing new with early reference made to the systematic trend in the intensification of work as a direct and unavoidable consequence of capitalism and the maximisation of the 'surplus value' of labour (Braverman, 1998). Technological developments such as the spread of the internet and the more recent evolution of the Smartphone, are said to have enabled the redesign of work in such a way that employers have greater control over the organisation, direction and surveillance of workers, thus increasing the work pressure felt by individuals (Gaillie, 2005). In addition, new 'cooperative' management practices such as the introduction of performance related pay or employee engagement initiatives have similarly been linked to the intensification of work and increased levels of job strain (Kalleberg, 2009; Ramsay, et al., 2000).

However, the idea that technological change results in the intensification of work is a contentious issue, with proponents of post-Fordist theory arguing that technological advancements, the shift towards a service based economy and the adoption of co-operative based management strategies within developed nations have reduced the workload of individuals, freeing them from the pace of the production line and providing more control over the work process (Handel, 2005; Drobnic & Gullen, 2011).

In addition, despite a growing body of literature dedicated to the exploration of work intensification in the new economy, it has been argued that the measurement of this concept poses a significant challenge with subjective feelings about the pace or pressures of work, difficult to separate from general feelings about the intensification of the pace of life (Drobnic & Gullen, 2011). Whether someone views being 'busier' as a good or bad job characteristic, is likely to depend largely on individual difference and personal experience. Nonetheless, there appears to be overall consensus within the literature that the intensification of work and rising levels of job strain, have a non-negligible impact on the creation of work-life imbalance and difficulties in reconciling work and private life, making it a prominent feature of job quality (Scherer & Steiber, 2007; Gaillie & Russel, 2009; Drobnic & Gullen, 2011).

By exploring the pace of work within the gig economy and the levels of job strain experienced by gig workers, a contribution can be made to broader debates regarding the

impact of technological advancements on issues of work intensification and broader trends in job quality.

4.5.3 Work Autonomy

Within the job quality literature, the issue of control has proved to be a central component in distinguishing between good and bad jobs (Green, 2006). Indeed, it has been argued that combatting control in work and labour remains a fundamental part of promoting dignified work and distributive justice (Standing, 2000). However, the conceptualisation of autonomy is not without its difficulties with a generally recognised division in the 'branches' of autonomy to include those related to task discretion and those related to worker involvement in decision making (organisational participation) (Gallie, et al., 2004).

Autonomy is commonly cited as a key dimension of job quality with evidence that workers who have control over their work and the way in which they do it, are more likely to obtain 'intrinsic' rewards (Kalleberg, 2011). For example, Gaillie (2007) found that task discretion was central to an individual's capacity for self-realisation in work, for their personal satisfaction in working life and for their feelings of commitment towards their employer. Further studies have also linked autonomy and task discretion to higher levels of job satisfaction (Spector, 1986; Bauer, 2004; Kalleberg & Vaissy, 2005) increased levels of trust and commitment to the employer (Appelbaum, et al., 2000) and improved psychological well-being (Gallie, 2013). To a similar end, routinization of work is widely associated with poor quality of work life due to its suppression of creative expression, innovation, involvement and commitment (Oldham & Hackman, 1980).

However, the extent to which autonomy or task discretion has a direct impact on the well-being of the worker has been disputed, with some scholars expressing the more likely indirect effect through the impact of task discretion on the other dimensions of job quality including, for example, work intensity and job security (Vidal, 2013). In addition, the evidence related to the importance of autonomy to the individual worker has been, at times, contradictory with autonomy being identified as an important aspect of a good job by only 20% of UK respondents (Munoz-Bustillo, et al., 2009). These inconsistent findings highlight the limitations of autonomy, on its own, as an indicator of well-being.

Indeed, rather than considering autonomy/control in isolation, some studies have focused upon the interation between autonomy and other job charcateristics in exploring the impact upon employee health and well-being. An example of this is provided in Karsek's

(1979) demand-control model which distinguishes between 'healthy' and 'unhealthy' jobs based upon the balance of work related demands and levels of task discretion and individual decision making authority. According to the demand-control model, jobs which are 'high demand' and 'low control' result in high levels of 'job strain' which can increase the risk of work-related illness including coronary heart disease, musculoskeletal disorders, psychological distress and reproductive disorders (Karasek, et al., 1998). Conversely, jobs which are high demand but have high levels of control contribute to 'active behaviour development', providing motivation and opportunities for skills development (ibid). Whilst the JDC model has since evolved incorporating, for example, different forms of worker support (see for example, Karasek & Theorell, 1990), subsequent empirical studies have provided support for the original propositions outlined in the model with evidence to suggest that autonomy is a desirable feature of work in its own right, in addition to mitigating the adverse effects of less desirable characteristics including high job demands and low levels of job complexity (Chung-Yan, 2010; Bryson, et al., 2016).

With high levels of autonomy commonly cited as a key benefit of working in the platform economy (Kalleberg & Dunn, 2017; Wood, et al., 2018), the extent to which perceptions of control and autonomy provide a motivating as well as a mitigating factor for those undertaking gig work provides a further important issue to be considered in exploring the quality of gig work.

4.5.4 Job Security

Job stability, also referred to as job security, is frequently ranked by individual workers as the most important factor contributing to job quality (Clark, 2005; Munoz-Bustillo, et al., 2009). However, as discussed in Chapter 2, transformations in the world of work have had significant implications for job security with increasing levels of international competition, the growth in the service sector and the volatility of consumer behaviour contributing to a growing desire for greater 'organisational flexibility' (Kalleberg, et al., 2000). This drive for flexibility has resulted in a decline in the dominance of the standard, full-time, permanent employment relationship which dominated much of the twentieth century with a rise in nonstandard, 'flexible' work arrangements including part-time and casual arrangements, the likes of which are often contractually insecure (Drobnic & Gullen, 2011). As a result, it is argued labour market risks are increasingly being borne by workers (Hacker, 2006).

Job insecurity has been linked to an increase in the risk of experiencing adverse health effects including: the onset of severe depression (Ferrie, et al., 2002), chronic stress (Sverke, et al., 2002), and general psychological ill health (Marchand, et al., 2005). Indeed, in a recent study by Lewchuk (2017) it was found that those in precarious employment were significantly more likely to report that their general health and mental health was 'less than very good' when compared to those in secure employment. In addition, those in precarious employment were also twice as likely to report that anxiety about their employment interfered with their personal and family life with a significant increase in the number of younger workers said to be delaying the formation of a long-term relationship or starting their own family (ibid). However, job security does not impact everyone equally with lower impacts on the health and well-being of individuals living in areas of high unemployment (Clark, 2003) and higher impacts on those subject to personal financial insecurity (Ferrie, et al., 2002). More recently the concept of 'flexicurity'[9] has been linked to a reduction in the adverse effects of job insecurity on the health and well-being of individuals, breaking the dominant association between job insecurity and job quality (Munoz de Bustillo & Pedraza, 2010).

Job security is commonly considered on a largely contractual basis in relation to different working arrangements and the extent to which these provide access to varying levels of social security protection, a further key characteristic of job quality (Overell, et al., 2010). However, there is growing recognition of both the objective characteristics of job security, including, for example, the agreed term of a contract, as well as subjective characteristics, such as the perception of insecurity (Munoz de Bustillo & Pedraza, 2010). Thus, it is argued that job security can be more appropriately defined as 'the likelihood of the worker losing their job and the feelings of perceived insecurity which accompany this' (Handel, 2005). For example, whilst permanent employees enjoy relative security in their protection from unfair dismissal, this does not mean that the worker will feel secure. This may instead depend on the normal practice and custom of the organisation in relation to dismissal, the individual's knowledge and understanding of employment law or the stability of the market in which their employing organisation operates. Indeed, in one study by Burgess and Connell (2008), it was found that the individual's perception of insecurity represented a stronger predictor of poor health than objective factors such as

[9] Flexicurity is linked to a balance between flexible employment practices and the ability for employers to hire and fire at will and the correlated provision of appropriate social security benefits to those effected and the encouragement of skill development amongst the workforce generally (see for example Burroni & Maarten, 2011).

the contract of employment. Moreover, in comparing studies reviewing the subjective perceptions of job insecurity and those reviewing more objective characteristics of job security such as job tenure, it appears that although levels of perceived insecurity are rising, jobs are more stable now than they ever have been (Gallie, 2002; Doogan, 2001; Drobnic & Gullen, 2011). Thus, subjective perceptions of security can be said to be equally as important as objective factors such as the contractual relationship, in assessing the impact of work on an individual's health and well-being and thus the overall quality of a job. As such and in recognition of calls for more integrated models of job quality which take account of social, economic and psychological needs, a further aspects of job security is drawn from the psychological literature: job congruence.

Job congruence as an indicator of job quality was proposed by Catherine Loughlin and Robert Murray in response to calls for the identification and modelling of the relative importance of theoretically driven individual based work attributes impacting workers well-being (Munoz-Bustillo, et al., 2009 as cited in Loughlin & Murray, 2013, p.530). It was found that job congruence not only impacted organisational outcomes but also had notable ramifications for workers psychological and physical health with a positive correlation found between a lack of congruence in individuals work status and preferred work status and higher levels of dissatisfaction, perceived job strain and a deterioration in physical/mental health (Loughlin & Murray, 2013). Furthermore, with companies increasingly seeking flexibility and with a growing number of workers voluntarily choosing to work in forms of non-traditional employment, it has been argued that employability (e.g. the ability for individuals to move self-sufficiently in and between labour markets), represents an increasingly important aspect of job security (De Cuyper, et al., 2011).

Therefore, whilst the absence of formal job security represents a key criticism of gig work (De Stefano, 2015), it is necessary to draw a broad interpretation of job security which incorporates both objective and subjective aspects and explores job security within the gig economy beyond issues of contractual status. As such, this study will explore, not only the formal job security arising from the employment status of gig workers, but also the perceived levels of job security or insecurity, for those working within this sector.

4.5.5 Training

A further core dimension of job quality relates to the access to training and opportunities for skill development. Skill development is considered a 'foundation of decent work'

central to the improvement of an individual's position in the labour market and their ability to secure better working conditions (ILO, 2010). Further, with the skills of the workforce directly linked to levels of productivity and economic prosperity, skill development has become an increasingly important aspect of the political agenda (EC, 2010). The increasing significance of skills is largely seen as a consequence of the major technological advancements seen within the past 50 years (Powell & Snellman, 2004). For example, recent technological changes in the workplace and the growth of the knowledge economy is said to have changed demand for workers with differing levels of skills, contributing to the growing stratification of labour (Kalleberg, 2007). A growing demand for formal skills, coupled with increasing international competition and a decline in the manufacturing sector, whilst arguably contributing to a general up-skilling of the workforce as a whole, is said to have had a negative impact on market conditions, particularly for workers with low levels of skill or formal education (Gaillie, 2007). In addition, several studies have shown the 'clustering' effect of job quality indicators with workers in seemingly 'low-skilled' occupations more likely to experience job insecurity and low wage levels (Gesthuizen, et al., 2011). Similarly, 'high-skilled' or professional occupations are frequently characterised by higher wage levels and better working conditions (Spitz-Oener, 2006).

Where opportunities for skills development and skill utilization are provided, they are generally valued by the worker and are associated with high levels of job satisfaction (Schoekkaert, et al., 2009; Schmidt, 2007). In addition, opportunities to exercise skill have been found to be one of the strongest predictors of employee well-being (Morrison, et al., 2005). To this end, the perception that a job allows an individual to exercise their skills is said to have the strongest influence on job-related mental health (Kornhauser, 1965) with underutilization associated with work-related depression (Karasek & Theorell, 1990). Thus, the extent to which a job provides opportunties for the exercise and development of skills can be said to be a key feature of job quality not only in improving employability but also in providing positive health benefits and contributing to positive work-related attitudes.

When considering gig work, the extent to which technology can be said to have contributed to improvements in the quality of employment through the provision of opportunities for skill development, remain somewhat unclear. For example, whilst it could be argued that platform technology has contributed to the routinization of work and a reduction in the skill level associated with the service by breaking down jobs into

individual tasks (Ritzer, 2018), the higher levels of autonomy associated with gig working (Wood, et al., 2018), may also provide increased opportunity for the development and exercise of, for example, attentional and problem-solving skills (Holmon & Wall, 2002; Morrison, et al., 2005). As such, it is necessary to explore, not only the training provided to individuals working in the gig economy, but the extent to which opportunities to develop transferable skills can be said to exist.

4.5.6 Opportunities for Advancement

Opportunities for progression or career advancement are frequently referenced within the job quality literature, often discussed in correlation with skill development and generally seen as contributing to improved levels of self-motivation and job satisfaction (Clark, 2001; Clark, 2005; Ritter & Ankner, 2002). However, the importance of promotion prospects remains widely debated within the literature. For example, whilst one study found only 3% identified this factor as the 'most important' (Clark, 2005) indicating its subservience in relation to other factors, a more recent study reported that 25% of workers in Great Britain identified opportunities for advancement as 'very important' (Munoz-Bustillo, et al., 2009) highlighting the variability in the importance placed on promotional opportunities in comparison to other factors.

Opportunities for advancement differ from the other job quality dimensions in that they relate to future expectations as opposed to current experience complicating the relationship with job quality (Jones, et al., 2016). For example, those in jobs which are poor quality in accordance with other dimensions such as pay and security may be more likely to value promotional opportunities than those who are satisfied with their current job. In addition, despite evidence related to the presence or absence of promotional and development opportunities for different groups of workers including, for example, flexible workers (Kelliher & Anderson, 2008), there is little evidence regarding the impact of these advancement opportunities on overall satisfaction and employee well-being. In response to these concerns, a broad conceptualisation of opportunities for advancement will be used as part of this study, focusing not only upon traditional, hierarchical promotional opportunities but upon the broader notion of career development and sustainability, exploring issues of longevity in relation to a career in the gig economy.

4.5.7 Working Hours

Working hours and patterns of work are a central characteristic of both safety at work and work-life balance (Lewis, et al., 2008) and as such, can be said to provide an important

dimension of job quality. Within the literature, working time is commonly discussed in relation to the total number of hours worked, the organisation of working hours, flexibility in working hours and the patterns of working hours. It is argued that, for the worker, the total number of hours worked and patterns of work can have a significant impact on personal health and the sustainability of working life whilst, for the employer, it represents a central element in the assessment of labour costs, productivity and overall competitiveness (Cabrita, et al., 2016). In addition, nonstandard patterns of work such as shift work, have frequently been linked to negative health effects such as increased stress and sleep problems, particularly within the healthcare sector where such patterns of work are common (Costa, 2010). Long and excessive working hours have also been shown to have a negative impact on employee health and well-being being associated with increased risk of negative health effects such as depression and heart disease (Virtanen, et al., 2005) in addition to having negative effects on family and marital relationships (Sparks, et al., 2001).

However, the relationship between working hours and satisfaction is not straight forward with variations in accordance with individual preference. For example, whilst working part time has been found to be beneficial for individual well-being (Bryan & Nandi, 2015) this depends largely upon personal preference as opposed to the actual number of hours worked with a reduction in well-being reported in cases where the individual was working more or less hours than they would like (Kalleberg, 2009; Wooden, et al., 2009). In addition, despite the negative effects associated with long working hours, it has been argued that these can be mitigated, in some cases, by the provision of opportunities for employee controlled flexible scheduling (Sparks, et al., 2001).

Furthermore, despite concerns over the impacts of long working hours, evidence suggests that the average number of agreed working hours has declined marginally across Europe[10] since the early 1990s[11] falling by roughly 2% in the United Kingdom from, on average, 38 hours per week in 1992 to 36 hours per week in 2011 (ONS, 2011). However, whilst working hours have remained largely stable over the past few decades, there has been growing diversity in the variety of work schedules with an increase in part-time and flexible jobs (Green, 2009). Both the standard working week and the patterns of work are

[10] The few exceptions include Poland, Austria, Bulgaria and France.
[11] The EU Working Time Directive designed to protect workers from excessive working hours was first enacted in 1993. Its provisions were incorporated in British Legislation under the Working Time Regulations in 1995.

said to have changed significantly since the industrial era, moving away from collectively regulated working hour norms and fixed patterns of work towards increasingly diversified lengths and patterns of working, characteristic of the post-industrial or 'new economy' (Bosch, et al., 1994). Thus, it can be argued that, whilst the overall number of hours worked may tell us very little about the quality of a job, the pattern, arrangement and calculation of working hours and the impact this has on work-life balance, may prove more important in understanding the impact of modern working arrangements on the quality of work. For example, advancements in technology such as the spread of the internet and, more recently, the Smartphone, have served to blur the lines between working time and family/leisure time raising concerns over the 'gap' between agreed working hours and actual working hours, and the rise in unpaid overtime (Scherer & Steiber, 2007). This trend towards increasingly diversified work schedules has seen growing interest in the effect of nonstandard working time on individual well-being and has revived the debate on the potentially detrimental effects of a culture of long working hours on the one hand (Bunting, 2004), and underemployment on the other (Bell & Blanchflower, 2011 as cited in Bryan & Nandi, 2015).

However, as is highlighted in the introductory chapter, research exploring new forms of work such as gig work remains largely underdeveloped with a lack of evidence concerning the impact of these 'flexible', task-based work schedules on the well-being and satisfaction of the workers. By exploring satisfaction with the arrangement of working hours within this new form of work, an insight can be gained into the types of individual who are more likely to benefit from such arrangements as well as those who may be adversely affected.

4.5.8 Safe Working Environment

Issues of health and safety at work and the impact of work and working conditions on the health of the worker has a long tradition within the job quality literature and often represents a key starting point in distinguishing between a good or a bad job (Munoz-Bustillo, et al., 2009). Indeed, with growing levels of awareness over the impact of work on the physical and mental health of the workers, safe working conditions represent a core feature in the ILO's definition of 'decent work' (ILO, 2017). Whilst the nature of some work, such as serving in the army, can be inherently more dangerous than others having a significantly higher risk of occupational injury, safety in the workplace emphasises the implementation and enforcement of appropriate health and safety procedures which mitigate and prevent the risk of harm to the worker (DeJoy, 1994). In

addition, whilst historically, much of the focus has been on the risk of physical harm through exposure to hazardous substances and other potential dangers in the physical environment, more recently a broader definition has been adopted which encompasses psychosocial, community and lifestyle factors. This is reflected in the definition of a 'healthy workplace' provided by the World Health Organisation as, 'one in which workers and managers collaborate to use a continual improvement process to help protect and promote the health, safety and well-being of all workers and the sustainability of the workforce by considering the following, based on identified needs:

- Health and safety concerns in the physical work environment.
- Health, safety and well-being concerns in the psychosocial environment including the organisation of work and workplace culture.
- Personal health resources in the workplace.
- Ways of participating in the community to improve the health of workers, their families and other members of the community' (Burton, 2010, p. 16).

There are a range of different approaches adopted in the inclusion of issues of health and safety within models of job quality. For example, some studies undertake objective external evaluations of safety at work and the level of risk based upon observations of the physical work environment measuring for example temperature, noise, exposure to chemical substances or workplace violence (Ramsey, et al., 1983; Campbell, et al., 2011; Stave & Wald, 2017). Similarly, objective assessments of health and safety can also be undertaken on basis of data related to work-related illness and injury such as that generated by the Health and Safety Executive (Toderi & Balducci, 2015) although such methods have not commonly been used within the job quality literature. An alternative strategy, and one which can be used in conjunction with objective measurements, is to explore the perceived subjective impacts of work upon health (Munoz-Bustillo, et al., 2009). Indeed, whilst health and safety issues are often excluded from subjective measures of well-being which focus upon health as an outcome rather than a component of job quality (Warr, 2007), the 'safety climate', i.e. the coherent set of expectations and perceptions that workers have regarding their safety at work (Cooper & Phillips, 2004) remains an important indicator of job quality. To this end, subjective interpretations of safety in the work environment and perceptions of safe work, have significant implications for job satisfaction (McIain, 1995; Gyekye, 2005), improved mental health

(Rahim, et al., 2014) and personal well-being (Danna & Griffin, 1999). In addition, by exploring individual's perceptions of and attitudes towards safety at work, the difference between health and safety procedures and actual working practice can be evaluated. Furthermore, with estimates that as much as two-thirds of all social legislation at EU level is related to health and safety (Eurofound, 2015), the importance of covering health and safety in a checklist approach to job quality is emphasised.

As a result of the dispersed nature of the workforce in the gig economy and the common absence of a physical work location (Stewart & Stanford, 2017) many health and safety procedures within the gig economy are likely to rely, in a large part, on self-regulation, something which has become gradually less common in the workplace as health and safety supervision has become more formalised, often being assigned to a specifically designated member of staff or specialist consultant (Walters, 2005). The impact of such differences on the safety of both workers and consumers, as well as how such issues could be addressed and the extent to which platform companies attempt to manage them, represents a further key issue which will be explored as part of this study.

4.5.9 Social Working Environment

The social work environment and its impact on health and well-being, has received increasing attention within the job quality literature. However, the specific aspects of the social work environment emphasised by researchers varies. For example, whilst some studies emphasise relationships with colleagues and related aspects of social support (Munoz de Bustillo, et al., 2011) others have adopted a broader definition, incorporating aspects of management support (Karasek, et al., 1998) and the number of colleagues within close proximity to the worker (Warr, 2007).

Despite these variations, a growing body of evidence has developed highlighting the positive relationship between social relationships at work and employee health and well-being (Sloan, 2012). For example, previous studies have shown that good working relationships are linked to positive employee outcomes such as higher levels of job satisfaction and improved happiness at work (Humphrey, et al., 2007; Bryson & MacKerron, 2016), whilst poor working relationships have been identified as a key source of stress (Johnson, et al., 2005) and depression (Sinokki, et al., 2009). In addition, it was found in a joint study undertaken by the European Agency for Health and Safety at Work and the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living Conditions that workers who reported high levels of support from colleagues were found to be less likely to report

problems with sleep, poor mental well-being and job dissatisfaction (Eurofound; EU-OSHA, 2014). Conversely, those who reported discrimination or adverse social behaviour, were found to be twice as likely to report health problems including poor mental wellbeing (ibid).

Similarly, 'good management' and the consideration a supervisor/manager has for their subordinate's well-being, is also said to provide an important predictor of job satisfaction (Sargent & Terry, 2000). To this end, perceived organisational support has been linked to a number of positive outcomes including; higher levels of job satisfaction (Stamper & Johlke, 2003); a reduction in incidences of ill-health and intention to leave (Dupre & Day, 2007) and ; a safer work environment (Parker, et al., 2001). In addition to its direct impact upon the outcomes of job quality, 'supportive supervision' is also recognised as an important feature of job quality due to its impact on other dimensions such as autonomy, safety and role clarity (Warr, 2007).

Although there is a significant body of evidence to show that social support is beneficial for the workers, the extent and ways in which this influences the quality of work has been the subject of debate. For example, whilst aspects of social support have been found to moderate the strain felt by employees, overall health and well-being is said to be affected more by non-work sources such as family and friends (Henderson & Argyle, 1985). Similarly, evidence has been provided by some studies to support the view that social support at work has a greater impact in its absence rather than its presence, proving beneficial predominantly in its mitigation against other negative workplace factors as opposed to providing a positive impact in and of itself (Karasek, et al., 1998; Wadsworth, et al., 2010). Evidence has also been provided which suggests that social ties and social support are not distributed equally amongst the general population with differences in relation to aspects of gender (Schieman, 2006) and race (Sloan, et al., 2013). For example, in the former study by Schieman it was found that women reported a higher level of co-worker support than men whilst the latter study by Sloan, et al., found evidence of a racial disadvantage for African Americans in regard to social ties and the perceived levels of worker support. Therefore, whilst evidence is provided within the literature of the associations between social support, satisfaction and well-being, variations exist in the ways in which, and the extent of these effects, on different groups of workers.

With evidence that remote and home working is associated with higher levels of social isolation (Harris, 2003) and with the workforce in the gig economy being largely

fragmented particularly within, for example, the food courier and taxi sectors (De Stefano, 2015) reducing opportunities for face to face interaction, it could be assumed that gig workers are likely to experience feelings of social isolation. However, evidence has been provided of the extent to which new technology, such as the Smartphone, can assist in mitigating feelings of social isolation by providing new ways for workers to interact, irrespective of time and location (Lal & Dwivedi, 2009). Therefore, a key area of interest is the extent to which the technology adopted within the gig economy influences individual's experiences of their social working environment. The relationship between technology and job quality is explored in greater detail in Section 4.6.3.

4.5.10 Employee Participation

The existence of formal and informal avenues of participation in decision making and the organisation of work is recognised as a key aspect of job quality, providing both opportunities to influence and improve job quality as well as increasing the workers sense of agency and autonomy (Munoz-Bustillo, et al., 2009). Indeed, employee participation has been linked to positive effects in the work environment including in improvements in organisational efficiency and employee health and well-being (Knudsen, et al., 2011). For example, an increase in worker participation is said to have a 'productivity enhancing effect' which, in turn, can lead to higher wages and job security (Gonzalez, 2010). Similarly, direct participation has been found to have a positive effect on such things as social relations at work and task autonomy which, in turn, may affect levels of job satisfaction and organisational commitment (Ramsay, et al., 2000). Employee participation in management and opportunities to shape organisational decision making has also been linked to higher levels of job satisfaction (Zhu, et al., 2014). To this end, the genuine opportunity for employees to influence organisational decision making (commonly referred to as employee engagement/involvement/voice) can be found within a number of models of job quality due to the direct and indirect impact on employee well-being (Holman, 2013).

In addition to issues of direct participation, a number of studies have also highlighted the correlation between worker representation (i.e. through trade unions or collective agreement) and higher levels of job quality (Gaillie, 2007). With trade unions representing a core labour institution and significant partners in social dialogue, trade union membership can provide a key indicator of participation (Munoz-Bustillo, et al., 2009). In addition, it has been found that levels of job satisfaction and the quality of physical working conditions are greater in organisations where there are high levels of

employee representation through, for example, trade union membership (Bryson, et al., 2004; Mussman, 2009).

However, whilst generally associated with improvements in job quality and job satisfaction, the higher levels of responsibility associated with direct participation have also been linked to increased levels of work intensification and work-related stress (Ramsay, et al., 2000) indicating the potentially negative effects for worker well-being. Indeed, whilst direct participation has the potential to improve job quality, it is argued that little is yet known about either the determinants of its adoption within European workplaces or the contexts in which it is most likely to contribute to improvements in the quality of jobs (Gonzalez, 2010). Thus, further investigation is needed in order to explore both the impact and the importance of different forms of employee participation in relation to aspects of job quality.

4.6 Factors Influencing Job Quality: Individual Differences, the Labour Market Context and Technology

Whilst the chapter, thus far, has identified the key work-related components of job quality, it is increasingly recognised that job quality is a multidimensional concept and that what makes a job good is likely to vary, not only as a result of the objective characteristics of a job, but in accordance with a range of individual and contextual factors (Knox, et al., 2015; Kalleberg & Vaissy, 2005; Gaillie, 2007; Holman, 2013). Thus, in order to achieve a more in depth understanding of job quality in the gig economy, evaluations of the quality of gig work need to be understood within the context of their 'fit' with personal circumstances and labour market characteristics. As such, this study will adopt a multi-dimensional approach, exploring individual's experiences and perceptions of the job quality components identified in Section 4.5, in addition to exploring the extent to which these experiences, and the impact of job characteristics on the outcomes of job quality, are influenced by the individual needs and preferences of the worker. In order to determine the state of current knowledge related to issues of individual variation, the following section explores current literature regarding the impact of individual and contextual differences on job quality and the influence of these factors upon the relationship between the dimensions and outcomes of good work. In addition, with the context for the study, namely the gig economy, providing an opportunity to explore broader trends related to the changing nature of work and, in particular, the impact of technology on the quality of jobs, current literature regarding the relationship between technology and job quality will also be explored.

4.6.1 The Influence of Individual Differences

One of the key difficulties in conceptualising job quality and identifying characteristics of good work, is the individual differences in the motivations, preferences and priorities of the workers. Indeed, it is commonly recognised by the majority of job quality commentators that what represents good work for one individual, may not for another with evidence that subjective assessments of job quality are informed by workers characteristics and preferences (Adler & Adler, 2005; Knox, et al., 2015). Individual personality types, social and economic backgrounds, personal values and beliefs, and varying skills and capabilities make it somewhat inevitable that different individuals will seek or favour different types of work and aspects of employment (Warr, 2007; Jones, et al., 2016). In addition, the importance placed on various aspects of work and an individual's expectations and aspirations are influenced by personal characteristics such as gender, race and age as well as education and work experience (Kalleberg, 2009). For example, some individuals may see a 'good job' as one that provides opportunities for advancement involving stimulating work and challenging work whilst another may see a good job as one which pays well and is secure with a consistent work schedule allowing time for family and leisure activities. To this end, an important aspect of job quality is the level of 'fit' between the job and the individuals personal circumstances including their life stage, age, professional and personal aspirations and the existence of available alternatives in pursuing their personal goals (Cooke, et al., 2013).

4.6.2 The Influence of the Labour Market Context

The concept of matching the worker to the job has been further extended to include the broader context of the labour market and the extent to which the supply and demand of labour influences individuals willingness to engage in employment (Kalleberg, 2007). For example, an absence of alternative employment opportunities due to, for example, an oversupply of labour has been linked to high levels of acceptance of objectively poor working conditions including lower wages (Knox, et al., 2015). In addition, the employment regime and the capacity of organised labour has also been found to influence the quality of jobs (Gaillie, 2007; Holman, 2013). For example, in an inclusivist regime where the labour market is tightly regulated and the involvement of organised labour in decision making is institutionalised, the quality of employment is said to be higher with improved access to training, higher wage levels and the aversion of exploitative conditions detrimental to employee well-being and job satisfaction (Wallerstein, 1999; Prais, et al., 1989; Holman, 2013). In contrast, in liberal market regimes, where

employment regulation is minimal and organised labour seen as disruptive, and dualist regimes where strong protective rights are provided but only to a core group of workers and often at the expense of the contingent workforce, overall levels of job quality are generally depressed (Gaillie, 2007).

A further factor considered influential in relation to job quality is that of culture. For example, in a study of cross-national variations in job quality it was found that the job characteristics most valued in Europe and America (job security and interesting work), differed from those valued by the Japanese who placed greater importance on the perceived 'usefulness' of a job to society (Munoz de Bustillo & Pedraza, 2010). This is said to reflect broader divergences in cultural values and the distinction between individualistic societies such as the USA, who place greater emphasis on personal achievement, and collective societies such as those in East Asia, which emphasise group interests and principles of collectivism (Oishi, et al., 2013). These values are often reflected in the economic, political and legal systems within a nation, forming the basis of cross-national comparisons in job quality.

However, despite growing recognition of the fact that, regardless of working conditions or job design, the influence of individual needs and preferences and the broader societal context, have a significant impact on perceptions and outcomes of job quality (Cooke, et al., 2013; Rosenthal, 1989), it is something which is often overlooked with attempts to measure job quality commonly based upon universal models (Leschke, et al., 2008). This may result in the loss of essential information and a lack of development of job preferences analytically (Brown, et al., 2007), providing an over simplistic view of job quality. As such, calls have been made for future studies to explore how personal and contextual factors impact employees' experiences of specific job types (Holman, 2013). This study aims to address these calls for work and context to be more actively engaged with by exploring how such factors influence individual's experiences and evaluations of gig work.

4.6.3 The Relationship Between Technology and Job Quality

Despite the sparsity of research reviewing the relationship between technology and job quality (Kosfeld & Siemens, 2011), theories concerning the impact of technology within the workplace have gained increasing traction within the management literature. Indeed, technological change has been described as 'inevitable' and 'relentless' and its ability to transform workplaces, skills and the quality of life has been the focus of analysis since

the industrial revolution (Connell, et al., 2014). For example, and as is discussed in more detail in Chapter 2 – The Changing Nature of Work, technological change in the workplace features prominently within the 'deskilling'/'reskilling' labour process debate. Under the more optimistic scenario technological change in the workplace is seen as emancipating the worker, with the adoption of new technologies leading to increased levels of autonomy and an upgrading of skills (Penn, 1983; Landry, et al., 2005). The opposing perspective views technology as an extension of management control over the labour process, resulting in the subordination of the workers knowledge and skills and an erosion of the quality of work (Braverman, 1998; Ritzer, 1993; Baines, 2004). However, whilst many of the earlier conceptual frameworks are deterministic regarding the impact of technological change with such scenarios being considered to be inevitable outcomes of technological developments, some studies have advocated a more nuanced approach recognising, for example, the impact of management in shaping technology use and impacts (Mankin, 1979).

Polarised views can also be found in considering the impact of technological change on employment opportunities and the extent to which this has contributed to the elimination and creation of jobs. Indeed, current studies have commonly focused upon the contribution of technology to 'job destruction' with estimations regarding the elimination of jobs as a result of automation and Artificial Intelligence ranging from between 10-60% (ILO, 2018) with some going so far as to predict the 'end of work' as a result of global technological displacement (Rifkin, 2004). Under the more optimistic scenario, the decline in demand for labour as a result of automation is expected to be offset by the creation of new jobs through the development of new industries and the adaptation of workers skills (Gallie, 2017). In reality, a growing number of empirical studies have provided evidence to suggest technological change impacts individuals differently across different occupations with growing concerns over levels of 'job polarisation' and the expansion of jobs at both higher and lower levels whist demand for workers performing 'mid pay' 'mid skill' jobs is reduced (Autor, et al., 2003; Goos & Manning, 2007). To this end, some studies have emphasised the 'skill-biased' nature of technological change which is seen to have contributed to the worsening of labour market outcomes, including a reduction in wages and higher levels of unemployment, amongst less-skilled workers (Berman, et al., 1998).

The introduction of new forms of surveillance, data recording and scheduling technologies and the ability for tasks to be broken down and monitored at the minute

level, have also led to concerns over the growth in a new form of 'digital Taylorism' and an erosion of autonomy at work (Brown, et al., 2010). Indeed, the adoption of 'surveillance' software such as that used in call centres and the detailed measurement of individual performance, whilst increasing transparency for the employer, is said to have contributed to the intensification of work and increased levels of associated stress and job strain (Green, 2004). However, despite concerns and criticisms over the Taylorisation of technologically enabled forms of work and, in particular, call centre work (Bain, et al., 2002), recent evidence has suggested that such concerns are overstated and that the new forms of algorithmic control found within the platform economy differ significantly from the Tayloristic forms of control associated with information communication technologies, instead facilitating higher levels of autonomy, task variety and flexibility (Wood, et al., 2018). As such, the digitisation of the management role within the gig economy and the consequential impact on the quality of work experience represents a key area of interest and one in need of further exploration.

Further to debates over the impact of algorithmic control, a number of empirical studies have found that implementation of information communication technology (ICT) within the workplace has an overall positive impact on individual's perceptions of their job (see for example, Long, 1993). Indeed, it has been suggested that the humane application of technology can improve life at work where the impact of broader economic, social and political factors on the quality of life is recognised along with present and future societal problems and opportunities (Mankin, 1979). For example, the introduction of new technology at work has been linked to positive outcomes of work-life balance with mobile technology providing greater flexibility to workers in order to meet both work and family needs (Hill, et al., 2003). Indeed, a third of employees participating in a recent study reported feeling 'empowered' through remote access to the workplace due to the greater levels of control over their work-life balance (CIPD, 2017).

However, whilst some studies have pointed to the positive impacts of technology on work-life balance, it has been argued that the flexibility provided through the use of Internet and mobile technology, whilst having the potential to lead to higher levels of job satisfaction, can have more severe negative effects on individuals due to the associated permeability in work-to-life and life-to-work (Nam, 2014). Indeed, one study found that receiving work-related communications outside of working hours resulted in increased levels of work family conflict and psychological distress in addition to contributing to difficulties sleeping (Schieman & Young, 2013). In addition, technological change has

been identified as an important source of work intensification and has been described by some as 'effort-biased' due to its contribution to greater levels of managerial control over the labour process, enabling management to maintain regular workflows and reduce levels of 'idle time' (Green, 2004). Remote working has also been associated with high levels of work intensity and longer working hours due to the extension of work beyond the workplace (Felstead & Henseke, 2017).

In addition to leading to an intensification of work, the rapid growth in communication technologies and the correlated reduction in face to face interactions has raised concerns over increasing levels of social isolation at work and a reduction in the quality of relationship. Indeed, it has been suggested that the decline in human contact at work as a result of new communication technologies is damaging to overall health and well-being in addition to contributing to increased levels of workplace conflict (Brione, 2017). However, evidence has been provided that technology can contribute to a reduction in social isolation for certain groups of workers including, for example, remote and home workers (Hislop, et al., 2015).

One of the other main ways in which technology can be said to have impacted the quality of work relates to the impact of automation on the health and safety of workers. For example, technology has been associated with improvements in the physical and mental health of workers through the replacement of some of the most dangerous and monotonous jobs with autonomation and robotics (Dellot & Wallace-Stephens, 2017). However, critics have argued that, in the case of mental well-being, automation has had a detrimental effect leading to higher levels of work-related stress (Patel, et al., 2018). The constant nature of technological change has also been associated with high levels of anxiety amongst managers and employees alike (Brione, 2017).

Therefore and as is highlighted in Chapter 2, there remains significant debate as to whether technological advancements in the workplace have had an overall negative or positive impact on job quality with a need for further empirical investigation into how workers view and use new technology at work and the extent to which this has impacted their quality of work life. This thesis aims to address this gap in the literature by exploring the use and perceived impact of technology on workers operating in the emergent gig economy. Due to the centrality of technology to gig work (Prassl, 2018), this context provides an opportunity to further explore and contribute to the debate on the impact of technological advancements on the quality of work in the modern economy.

4.7 Conclusions

The aim of this chapter was to explore current theoretical conceptualisations of job quality in order to provide a foundation for an exploration of the quality of work within the gig economy. As can be seen within the literature, little consensus has been achieved in the conceptualisation of job quality making it difficult to measure and define what a good job might look like. This is largely due to the multifaceted and subjective nature of the concept which remains fluid across time and is interconnected and influenced by the other quality of life domains. However, a number of commonalities can be identified in the work-related factors included in current models of job quality as well with the outcomes of 'good' work. It is these widely cited work-related factors or components of job quality which are included within the model of job quality proposed by Munoz de Bustillo, et al., (2011) and which are discussed within this chapter, which will underpin the conceptual framework for this study, increasing the scope for analytical generalisations and the comparability of findings.

In addition, in line with calls for work and context to be more thoughtfully engaged with in the conceptualisation and evaluation of job quality (Cooke, et al., 2013; Goods, et al., 2019) a multidimensional approach will be adopted, exploring workers subjective perceptions of gig work within the context of issues related to individual 'fit', taking into accounts factors such as personal circumstances and labour market characteristics. This can assist in providing a deeper understanding of job quality in the gig economy and the conditions under which, and for whom, gig jobs may be perceived as good or bad, building upon current evidence outlined in Chapter 3. Finally, with platform technology at the heart of work in the gig economy, an opportunity is provided to contribute to broader debates regarding the impact of technology on job quality as discussed in Chapter 2. As such, the use and perceived impact of technology on individual's experiences of work within the gig economy will also be explored.

Figure 4.1 illustrates the elements of job quality which have been discussed within the literature review and which will inform the remainder of the study, providing a conceptual framework through which individuals experiences of their work within the gig economy can be understood. The following chapter will outline and discuss the methodological approach which will be adopted in order to address the objectives of the study.

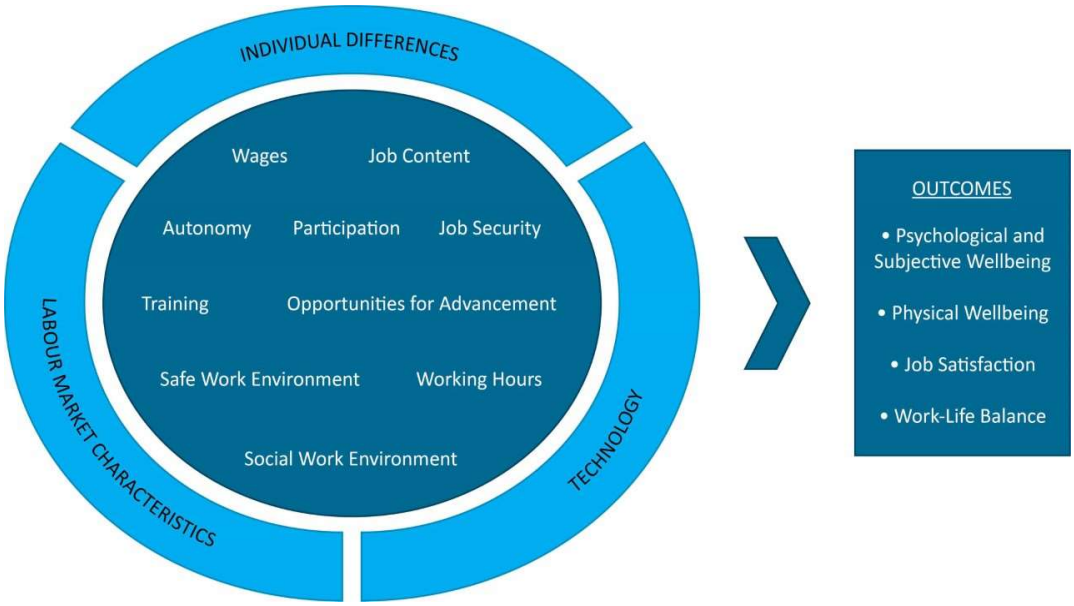

Figure 4.1 Conceptual Framework for Exploring Job Quality in the Gig Economy

Chapter 5 – Methodology

5.0 Introduction

In the preceding chapters, literature on gig work and job quality were discussed at length. A key outcome from the discussions was a plan for further research on the quality of work experience in the gig economy and the development of a conceptual framework providing a lens through which the subjective experiences of workers can be understood. Building upon this, the following chapter will outline and discuss the proposed methodology which is adopted in addressing the objectives of the study detailed in Section 1.3. The chapter aims to position the study within the context of the broader scientific debates concerning the nature and philosophy of knowledge in order to highlight the rationale for the decision to design and conduct the research in the manner proposed. The first part of the chapter will outline the research strategy adopted in this study and consider the epistemological and ontological perspectives which underpin this strategy. Following on from this, consideration will be given to the design of the research and the methods adopted for collecting and analysing data, as well as the strengths and limitations of the proposed methods. The final main section of the chapter involves a discussion of the ethics associated with exploring job quality in relation to gig work.

5.1 Research Philosophy

Research philosophy relates to the source, nature and development of knowledge and it is in accordance with these philosophical frameworks or paradigms, which scientific research is conducted (Collis & Hussey, 2009). To this end, methodology is commonly associated with a body of methods and techniques associated with the production of research and is said to reflect the researchers philosophical stance and the ontological and epistemological assumptions made about the nature of human activity and what constitutes 'true' knowledge (Wass & Wells, 1994). The importance of considering the philosophical assumptions which underpin research is widely recognised within the literature with a failure to consider such matters having the potential to undermine the value of research (Bryman & Bell, 2015). As such, the following chapter will begin with a discussion of some of the different philosophical positions and debates in relation to issues of epistemology and ontology, and the implications of the adoption of any position on research methodology.

Until the late 1800s, research focused mainly on objects in the physical world and the interactions between them using systematic methods of observation and experimentation

and the application of deductive logic in order to discover and develop explanatory theories and hypotheses (Smith, 1983). Social observations were seen as 'entities' in the same way as physical phenomena and thus could be observed objectively with the aim of establishing and describing generalisable, social laws (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). This emphasis on the application of methods from the natural sciences to the study of the social world is commonly associated with a philosophical perspective known as positivism (Bryman, 2008).

However, a number of philosophers rejected the positivist philosophy, challenging the application of traditional scientific methods in explaining complex social phenomena (Kellner, 1990). The main alternative which arose as a result of the rejection of the natural science model in the study of social reality is that of constructivism or interpretivism. In direct contrast to positivism, interpretivism considered the subject matter of social science (e.g. people and their institutions) to be fundamentally different from that of the natural sciences (Hughes & Sharrock, 2016). Thus, due to this fundamental difference in the nature of the subject matter, it was argued that the study of the social world required an entirely different logic or research procedure which reflected the distinctiveness of humans as against the natural order (Bryman, 2012). Indeed, the core division between the two approaches is said to be between an emphasis on the explanation of human behaviour through the forces acting upon it, seen in positivism, versus the understanding of human action and behaviour as emphasised within the interpretivist approach (Von Wright, 1971).

Whilst positivism and interpretivism represent the two 'extreme' epistemological perspectives, over time, a range of alternative theoretical perspectives or 'research paradigms' have emerged, often adopting certain features and assumptions of either extreme approach and thus being likened to approaches within a continuum (Morgan & Smircich, 1980). This seemingly temporal nature of research paradigms and their perpetual evolution is highlighted in Kuhn's definition, describing them as 'universally recognised scientific achievements that, for a time, provide model problems and solutions to a community of practitioners' (Kuhn, 1962, p. 8). Thus, in addition to positivism and interpretivism there now exist a range of research paradigms (such as post-positivism, critical theory, structuralism and modernism) influencing what should be studied, how it should be studied and how results should be interpreted. To further complicate matters, there are a range of different methods of classification and categorisation of the approaches within the main paradigms, with terms often having different meanings across

disciplines and throughout time, and depending on whether the paradigm is being discussed at a philosophical, social or technical level (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

Whilst it is outwith the scope of this thesis to provide an in-depth discussion of the epistemological, ontological and methodological assumptions which characterise each of the different research paradigms and the appropriateness of current categorisations; in order to position this researchers attempt to generate knowledge within the context of broader debates concerning the philosophy of knowledge, the following section will provide a brief overview of the two core philosophical concepts which shape the fundamental nature of knowledge and reality; ontology and epistemology.

5.2.1 Ontology

Ontology concerns claims related to the nature and being of existence and, in particular, the fundamental nature of reality (Hammond & Wellington, 2018). In the social sciences, ontology is described as a dichotomy relating to the nature of social entities and whether they should be considered 'objective entities' with a reality which exists independently of human knowledge or perception, or 'social constructions' arising from the perceptions and actions of their social actors (Bryman & Bell, 2015). The former perspective, also known as objectivism, is an 'ontological position which asserts that social phenomena and their meanings have an existence that is independent of social actors (Bryman, 2012, p. p.33). From an objectivist perspective, an organisation for example, is seen as a tangible object, a constraining force whose distinctive features, such as the system of hierarchy, the organisational values or the policies and procedures, act upon and inhibit the members within it. The phenomena (the organisation), is seen as having the characteristics of an object and thus an objective reality.

In contrast, subjectivists (the opposing perspective in the ontological dichotomy), rather than seeing the organisation as an external reality which acts upon and constrains its members, instead emphasises the active role of individuals in the construction of social reality and the existence of the organisation as an outcome of negotiation and social interaction (Bryman, 2008). This perspective, whilst recognising that social phenomena have a reality which can precede and exist independently of social actors and may influence perspectives, rejects the notion that this is objective reality but can be more accurately likened to a point of reference that is in a constant state of revision (Neuman & Robson, 2014). Thus, constructionism, as an alternative ontological position, views social entities and their meanings as being in a state of continuous change and revision

through a combination of the processes of social interaction and cognitive processing which occurs within the mind of the learner (Erikkson & Kovalainen, 2016).

Within contemporary sociology, it is increasingly recognised that the 'social' involves both objectification and meaningful construction and that the two processes are in fact continuous and indivisible (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Indeed, it is argued that some ontological assumptions may suit some, but not all, research topics. For example, where the social context is highly structured with well-defined social processes that produce a stable set of outcomes, it is argued that 'traditional' (quantitative) research methods remain important (Goldthorpe, 2005). However, where the social context, processes or outcomes are less stable or well-defined or where the topic area is relatively new, it is argued that qualitative research methods may be more appropriate, providing a more holistic view of a complex social phenomena and avoiding the imposition of the researchers constructed meaning on the participants perspective (Bryman, 2012). The selection of either approach is likely to be intertwined with the philosophical and epistemological assumptions of the researcher and the beliefs regarding knowledge generation. Taken together, these assumptions characterise a given research paradigm and guide how the research will be carried out, including in the methodological strategies used. Having provided a brief overview of ontology, the following section will provide a summary of the interrelated concept of epistemology.

5.2.2 Epistemology

Epistemology relates to the source, nature and development of knowledge and influences what is considered 'acceptable' knowledge within a given discipline (Bryman, 2012). A central issue in this context, and one which is closely connected to issues of ontology, relates to the issue of whether the social world can and should be studied in accordance with the principles, procedures and ethos of the natural sciences. In accordance with this, a dichotomy of epistemological perspectives has emerged including: positivism, which emphasises the application of the natural science model to the social world and; interpretivism which sees social research as having a special concern for uncovering meaning associated with human activity (Hammond & Wellington, 2018).

Epistemology is closely connected to the concept of ontology in that it is difficult to imagine the world without considering claims to knowledge about the world (Guba, 1990). Thus, and as is highlighted in the previous section, epistemology and ontology are positioned together at the top of the hierarchy, informing the nature of the research aims

and objectives and the methodology adopted in order to achieve those objectives. Such considerations provide the logic for inquiry and a failure to understand that logic, may result in an incoherent study (Bryman, 2008). However, in practice the distinction between the two traditions is not as clear cut as it may first appear with research arising from the positivist tradition often demonstrating awareness of the ephemeral nature of the knowledge constructed. Similarly, a number of interpretivist studies have followed positivist tendencies in treating some concepts as objective in order to focus on categories which are more problematic or less well defined (Hammond & Wellington, 2018). Thus, whilst the two approaches are often discussed as 'opposites' in relation to each other, in reality the lines between the different perspectives have become increasingly blurred. In order to highlight the core principles upon which these approaches differ, a discussion will be provided in the following section of these two 'dominant' paradigms in addition to what is increasingly referred to as the 'middle-ground' or 'third' paradigm.

5.2.2.1 Positivism

As touched upon in the introduction, positivism represented the first dominant research paradigm developed in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century by British Philosophers David Hume and John Mills and was promoted by the founder of sociology Auguste Comte (Hassard, 1995). Positivist social science can be defined as, 'an organised method for combining deductive logic with precise empirical observations of individual behaviour in order to discover and confirm a set of probabilistic causal laws that can be used to predict general patterns of human activity' (Neuman, 2013, p. 97). It is underpinned by the belief that reality is external or independent of the mind and that there is a single objective reality to any phenomenon regardless of the researcher's perspective or prior beliefs (Carson, et al., 2001). It shares its philosophical foundation with quantitative methods and has been referred to as the 'science of society' with knowledge being derived from so called 'positive information' which is scientifically verified or is capable of logical or mathematical proof (Walliman, 2001). From a positivist perspective, only phenomena which can be experienced with the senses (e.g. which are observable and measurable) can produce true 'factual' knowledge (Waugh & Ariew, 2014). Paradigms which have their foundations in positivism focus on the use of theories to explain or predict various social phenomena by establishing causality through the formulation and testing of various hypotheses (Collis & Hussey, 2009). The general aim of the positivist approach is the production of social laws or generalisations which are independent of both time and context and which can be used to explain and understand how the social world

works (Neuman & Robson, 2014). As these 'laws' of human behaviour are discovered, the knowledge can be used to alter and improve social conditions (Neuman, 2013). Such goals are deemed to be possible due to the belief that human actions can be explained in relation to 'causal' factors which precede behaviour, and due to the detachment of the researcher from the object or phenomena of study (Sarantakos, 2012). Positivism emphasises the importance of 'value-free' scientific knowledge which transcends values, beliefs attitudes or opinions through the application of rational thinking and systematic observation (Creswell, 1994).

The philosophical assumptions as to the objective nature of reality, whilst commonly found in natural sciences, were said to be 'less convincing' when applied to the social sciences given the fundamental difference in the subject matter of the social sciences (i.e. people and their institutions) (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Indeed, it has been argued that positivistic approaches provide an unsatisfactory foundation for exploring job quality due to the failure to account for the impact of individual differences and contextual factors, resulting in an oversimplified picture of job quality (Cooke, et al., 2013; Findlay, et al., 2013).

5.2.2.2 Realism

Philosophic realism has gained increased attention as an alternative, 'middle-ground' as a stance for research within the social sciences (Maxwell & Mittapalli, 2010). Philosophic realism relates to the view that entities exist independently of our perception of them and our theories about them (Phillips, 1987). Thus, reality is whatever it is within the universe, for example the structures or forces, that cause the phenomena being observed (Schwandt, 1997). Although situated as an alternative paradigm, realism is said to share two key features with positivism: a belief that the natural and social sciences can and should be studied in the same way and, a commitment to the view that there is an external reality, separate from our descriptions of it, to which scientists should focus their attention (Bryman, 2012). However, whilst realists maintain that the objects of scientific theory are real entities within the world, they reject the 'instrumentalism' of positivism and in particular: the belief that all scientific knowledge is borne from empirical irregularities; the view that only things which are observable with the senses are part of the real world; the focus on the creation of law like generalizations as the main objective of scientific research and, to an extent, the notion that the deductive approach provides the foundation for all empirical reasoning (Miller, 1987). In particular, critical realists reject the regularity theory of causation associated with positivism and the notion that causality

consists simply of regular associations between variables and that nothing can be known about the unobservable or hidden mechanisms which produce these irregularities (Maxwell, 2012). Critical realists argue that there are always aspects of reality that remain hidden beneath the surface of what can be observed but which themselves, bring about observable regularities and thus remain central to explanation (Hibberd, 2010). These 'generative mechanisms' or hypothetical entities which account for regularities in the natural or social order, are seen, not simply as abstract models, but as real phenomena (Bhaskar, 1998). Thus, in contrast to the positivist perspective, realism acknowledges the reality of mental phenomena and the value of an interpretive perspective for studying these (Sayer, 2000).

The philosophical debates over realism remain ongoing with scientific realism being described as 'a majority position whose advocates are so divided as to appear a minority' (Leplin, 1984, p. 1). According to Bryman (2012), there are two dominant forms of realism: empirical realism (also referred to as naïve realism) which asserts that there is one correct way in which reality can be divided up and understood through the use of appropriate scientific methods and; critical realism which instead asserts that the world is the way it is but a scientists conceptualisation is simply a way of knowing that reality, representing an attempt to express, in thought, the structures and ways of acting which exist and act independently of thought (see Bhaskar, 1989). The latter perspective, which represents the most prominent manifestation of realism within the social sciences, denies that we can have an objective or certain knowledge of the world (a 'gods eye view') and acknowledges the possibility that there can be more than one scientifically correct way of understanding reality (Neuman, 2013). Therefore, whilst critical realists retain a form of ontological realism in the assertion that there is a real world which exists independently of our perceptions, theories and constructions, they can be said to accept a form of epistemological interpretivism in recognising that our understanding of the world is a construction from the individual's viewpoint (Maxwell, 2012). Indeed, whilst critical realists reject the idea of 'multiple realities' or social constructed, independent worlds, they accept that there are different perspectives of reality and that the world we live in is structured by our concepts which are to a large extent, expressed in language (Bhaskar, 1998).

It has been suggested that realism is well suited to the study of job quality, taking into account 'measurable' aspects of job quality such as the number of hours worked or the level of salary paid, whilst also recognising that an individuals' perception may influence

the effects of these job features on the outcomes of job quality (Jones, 2014). Whilst this approach can address some of the weaknesses of more positivistic approaches by recognising incidences of individual variation, it still presents a view of a good job as something which exists independently of individuals perceptions and experiences, potentially undermining the importance of individual 'fit' and of avoiding a one size fits all approach regarding initiatives aimed at improving job quality.

5.2.2.3 Interpretivism

Interpretivism, as discussed above, represents a contrasting paradigm to that of positivism arising largely from the rejection of the application of the scientific model to the study of the social world (Collins, 2010). Its origins can be traced to the work of sociologist Max Weber and philosopher Wilhelm Dilthey whom, in his seminal piece Introduction to the Human Sciences (1883) argued that there were two different types of science; naturwissenschaft (related to abstract explanation) and geisteswissenschaft (rooted in the notion of empathetic understanding of peoples every day lived experiences) (Neuman, 2013). This idea was embraced by Weber (1891) who emphasised the importance of learning the factors and motivators which shape internal feelings and influence an individual's decision making and behaviour. Interpretivism is frequently associated with phenomenology and the study of structures of consciousness as experienced from the first-person point of view (Gray, 2013). Within this perspective, human behaviour is seen as a product of how people interpret the world and thus emphasises the need to see things from that persons point of view in order to understand that behaviour (Cooper, et al., 2013). It is underpinned by the belief that, in contrast to the positivist perspective on the nature of reality, social reality is not objective but is highly subjective, shaped by people's perceptions and inseparable from what is in the researcher's mind (Creswell, 1994). Thus, whereas positivists remain focused upon the measurement of social phenomena, interpretivists are focused on exploring the complexity of various social phenomena with a view to gaining 'empathic understanding' (Bryman & Bell, 2015). The interpretivist approach can be defined as, 'the systematic analysis of socially meaningful action through the direct detailed observation of people in natural settings in order to arrive at understandings and interpretations of how people create and maintain their social worlds' (Neuman, 2013, p. 104). A key concept within this definition is that of meaningful social action, i.e. action which has purpose and to which individuals attach meaning rather than action which is simply observable. It is necessary to capture individual's subjective experiences of reality in order to understand social life.

Whereas positivism emphasises the role of external forces and deterministic relations, interpretivism emphasises the influence of human agency and the ability to make conscious choices (see also discussion of ontology in s. 5.2.1). Thus, interpretivists place greater importance on a person's view and understanding of the world as opposed to the objective conditions and structural forces emphasised by positivists in identifying 'laws' (Ghauri & Gronhog, 2010). Rather than adopting the quantitative, mathematical approaches used by positivists, interpretivists aim to develop an understanding of social life and explore how individuals construct meaning within natural settings and how they experience everyday life through the attainment of detailed qualitative data (Van Maanen, 1983). In addition, the criteria used in the evaluation of findings obtained within the interpretivist paradigm are different to those applied in the positivist paradigm. For example, whilst positivism evaluates the quality or value of research in accordance with the extent to which it can be generalised to the broader population, the value of understanding which emerges from an interpretivist study is instead determined by the extent to which it represents an accurate reflection of the participants perspective (Glasser & Strauss, 1967). For the interpretivist researcher it is more important to understand motives, reasons, meaning and other subjective experiences bound by time and context, than it is to predict cause and effect (Neuman & Robson, 2014).

In regard to job quality, interpretivist approaches can assist in providing a richness of detail and a depth of understanding which is arguably well-suited to exploring the nuances of job quality. Indeed, it is increasingly recognised that that the quality of work is influenced not only by the 'objective' characteristics of a job but by the level of 'fit' between the job and the individual (see section 4.6). As such, whilst the interpretivist approach to job quality has been criticised for emphasising the individual perspective over and above objective knowledge (Goods, et al., 2019), by exploring job quality from a worker perspective a better understanding can be gained as to the reasons for variations in the quality of work experience and conditions under which, and for whom, a specific occupation may represent a good or bad job.

5.2.3 The Philosophical Stance of This Research

The positionality researchers bring to their work and their paradigmatic and philosophical position is said to have an influence on research related thinking and practice including choices in processes and the interpretation of data (Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2013). In reflecting upon the exploratory nature of the study and the divergent philosophical perspectives discussed above, the position adopted by this research is that of

interpretivism. As important components of job quality can often only be measured through the reports of workers, comprehensive measures of job quality cannot be detached from the limitations and potential advantages of subjective data (Green, 2006). Indeed, there can be said to be multiple realities or perspectives on job quality with a 'good' or 'quality' job often meaning different things to different people. It is due to this subjective nature of job quality, that the 'reality' of what makes a job good or bad in the gig economy cannot easily be defined by the researcher alone. Instead, it is more important to capture the meanings, experiences and perceptions of those who have lived through the process in order to better understand the quality of work experience in the gig economy which can only be achieved by listening to the views of those engaged in gig work. The interpretivist approach recognises that those undertaking gig work are the most reliable source in elucidating the reality of work life in the gig economy and what a good or bad job might look like within this context. Thus, rather than imposing the researcher's perspective of what constitutes 'quality', this study adopts a worker perspective, building knowledge in accordance with the job features participants deem important, how they come to categorise a job as good or bad and their perception and experiences of work in the gig economy. This approach allows for meaning to be discovered through the interpretation of expressive data such as values, beliefs, and motives, which influence action at the individual level (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

In considering the researcher positionality, it is important to recognise researchers as part of the social world they are exploring and the inseparability of the researcher from the social processes they study (Schutt, 2018). The types of questions asked, the analysis of findings and the development of analytical codes are influenced by the researcher's values, personal experiences and world views. In addition, the values and experiences of participants interact with those of the researcher, deepening the level of analysis. Thus, rather than trying to eliminate the effect of researcher influence on the research process, researchers should instead aim to understand this influence in evaluating the 'truthfulness' of the research (see discussion on evaluating the quality of qualitative research in Section 5.6). In considering the researchers positionality relative to the participants of the study, as a non-member of the gig economy the researcher is, initially, an outsider in this study. However, due to the social nature of the research process and the co-creation of knowledge between the researcher and the participant, this position may change throughout the research process as the researcher becomes more familiar with the community under study (Herod, 1999).

5.3 Research Strategy: Qualitative Research

Having outlined the objectives of this thesis as well as the positionality of the researcher, it is necessary to consider the overall research strategy which can be most appropriately deployed in attempting to address the proposed objectives. A research strategy relates broadly to the general orientation to the conduct of social research and is generally used to distinguish between quantitative and qualitative research (Bryman, 2012). Whilst the usefulness of such distinctions have been the subject of considerable debate, qualitative research is said to differ, not only in relation to its epistemological and ontological foundations, with quantitative research being frequently associated with positivism whilst qualitative research is associated with interpretivism, but also in consideration of the role of theory in relation to research (Bryman & Bell, 2015). For example, whereas quantitative research embodies the objectivist conception of social reality and emphasises the natural science approach to knowledge generation, qualitative research views social reality as an emergent property of individuals creation which is in a constant state of revision and is best understood through an examination of the interpretation of the world by its participants (Cooper, et al., 2013). In accordance with this, whilst quantitative research generally entails a deductive approach to the relationship between theory and research with an emphasis on the testing of hypotheses, qualitative research is often associated with a more inductive approach, preferring to treat theory as something which emerges during the collection and analysis of data (Collis & Hussey, 2009). A further distinction can be made in relation to the way in which concepts are used in research. For example, a distinction can be made between 'definitive' concepts used in quantitative research and the 'sensitizing' concepts associated with qualitative research (Bryman, 2012). Whilst the former sees a concept, once developed, as something which is fixed and seen exclusively through the elaboration of indicators, the latter approach recognises the concept as something which provides a general sense of reference and guidance for empirical enquiry and thus should be employed in order to give a general sense of what to look for (Blumer, 1954).

In line with the exploratory nature of the research objectives outlined in Section 1.3 and the philosophical assumptions discussed in Section 5.2, this study adopts a qualitative research strategy, focusing on the collection of non-numerical data from gig workers in order to build an in-depth and more nuanced understanding of job quality in the gig economy. This will assist in addressing current gaps in the literature, with an absence of research related to the quality of working life issues for workers in alternative and modern

forms of employment. In addition, such an approach allows for a more holistic understanding of the dynamics of job quality and the factors influencing perceptions of job quality within this context to be gained, with current notions of job quality providing a frame of reference to guide the empirical enquiry. Whilst quantitative data can be used to measure and compare job quality across occupations, it cannot explain how the individual feels about different aspects of their job or why one workers perception of their job is different to that of another's and as such, was deemed not to be a suitable approach in attempting to understand the nuances of job quality in this new context. Qualitative research can be defined as,

'An inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyses words, reports detailed views of informant and conducts the study in a natural setting' (Creswell, 1998, p. 15).

There are a range of methods employed by qualitative researchers in order to build understanding of how individuals perceive their social realities and the influence this has on how they behave within the social world including, for example, open-ended questionnaires, ethnographic studies, observational techniques, diary accounts and interviews. In exploring the lived experience of those working in the gig economy and their perceptions of their work, this study will adopt a qualitative interview approach. The following section will provide a more detailed discussion of this approach, its strengths and weaknesses and the justifications for adopting this technique in the current study.

5.4 Methodological Approach: Qualitative Interviewing

Interviews have been used extensively for data collection within the social sciences in order to gain a more in depth understanding of an individual's thoughts, feelings and experiences relative to the subject of the research (Cooper, et al., 2013). The individual's responses represent the 'raw' data which is then analysed and interpreted by the researcher at a later point in time (Ackroyd & Hughes, 1992).

Within research related to the quality of work more generally, interviews have been adopted primarily as a means to gather information about a specific organisation, industry or sector (Jones, et al., 2016; Kalleberg & Vaissy, 2005; Wreder, et al., 2008). Interview data related to the nature and quality of gig work is currently limited with the majority of prior studies using national level survey data and questionnaires in attempts to delineate

information related to such things as the size of the gig economy, the demographics of gig workers and extrinsic job features such as wage levels and working hours (see Balaram, et al., 2017; Donovan, et al., 2016; REC, 2016; MGI, 2016). The findings of a number of these studies have been further limited by the definitional disparities in the conceptualisation of gig work and the reliance upon official survey data which has thus far failed to delineate this segment of the workforce from the broader category of independent work. Moreover, whilst these studies have provided prima facie evidence of the objectively poor quality of gig work, they tell us little about the how these workers truly feel about their jobs or the impact of gig employment practices on their day to day lives.

Whilst a number of different 'types' of interview exist including; survey, structured, semi-structured, unstructured, in-depth, self and group interviews, there are said to be two main types of qualitative interview; the unstructured interview and the semi-structured interview (Bryman, 2012). The unstructured interviews are relatively informal with the researcher adopting a conversational approach and using open-ended questions in order to achieve a more holistic understanding of the interviewee's perceptions or experiences (Bryman & Bell, 2015). This approach emphasises explanation and understanding of the particular concept or phenomena as opposed to the production of generalisable data as in the case of the more structured approach.

Semi-structured interviews, whilst similar to unstructured interviews in relation to the emphasis placed on the importance of the participants perspective in explaining and understanding events, patterns and forms of behaviour, differ in the prior determination of the topics and issues to be discussed, often relying upon what is referred to as an interview guide (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017). The choice of whether to use unstructured or semi-structured interviews is said to be affected by a variety of factors including; whether the topic has a clear focus, how many researchers are involved in the field work and whether a single or multiple case study approach has been adopted (Bryman, 2012). In line with the checklist approach adopted within this study which seeks to explore job quality in the gig economy by examining gig workers experiences and perception of the dimensions of quality in their jobs, and in order to ensure some level of cross case compatibility, a semi structured approach was deemed most appropriate. Interviews were conducted face to face where possible and were recorded and transcribed in order to assist in improving the accuracy of the researcher's interpretation and to allow the researcher to revisit and reuse the data at a later point.

The following section will provide a brief discussion of the strengths and limitations of the semi-structured interview and the reasons why such an approach was selected.

5.4.1 Semi-Structured Interviews

As highlighted in the previous section, semi-structured interviews are a data collection technique in which the researcher asks the participants a series of often qualitative, pre-determined questions related to fairly specific topics (Neuman & Robson, 2014). In addition, and in contrast to the more structured interview associated with quantitative research, the researcher is provided the opportunity to explore particular themes or responses in more detail through the use of probing questions (Cooper, et al., 2013). The flexible nature of the semi structured interview means that, not only can more structured data about specific features of gig work and their influence on perceptions of job quality be obtained, but it also allows for the exploration of topics which are of particular interest to the workers, providing a more holistic understanding of job quality in this context.

Despite the advantages associated with participant observation in relation to seeing through the eyes of others (Collis & Hussey, 2009), with the workers subjective experiences and perceptions of their job providing the foundation for the study, interviews were deemed a more viable data collection tool. Indeed, whilst the emersion of the researcher into the gig economy may provide an in depth insight into the practices within this sector, it does little to uncover issues of individual fit including, for example, the reasons why individuals moved into this form of work, how they perceive their job or how working in this way effects their broader quality of working life. Similarly, whilst the use of focus groups may have proved advantageous in allowing participants perspectives to be revealed in ways other than through interviewing (e.g. though group discussion and debate) (Bryman & Bell, 2015), interviews were deemed to be preferable due to both the practical implications of arranging focus groups with individuals from a highly dispersed workforce and potential for discomfort among participants in discussing aspects of their private lives within a group setting.

The following section will provide a brief overview of the design and development of the interview guide utilised within this study.

5.4.1.1 Designing the Interview Guide

An interview guide used within a qualitative interview is less specific than a structured interview schedule and may contain a list of ‘prompts’, as in the case of a more unstructured interview, or a list of questions as is often seen in the case of the semi

structured interview. In preparing an interview guide, researchers should attempt to formulate questions or topics which will help to address the pre-defined objectives of the research but which are not so specific as to close off alternative avenues of enquiry which may arise during data collection (Bryman, 2008). Indeed, flexibility is a core feature of the qualitative interview and an essential skill of a quality interviewer (Kvale, 1996). As in the case of any interview, researchers must also be aware of their use of language and should attempt to make questions comprehensible whilst also avoiding the use of leading questions (Foddy, 1994). Kvale (1994) identified nine categories of questions featured in qualitative interviews: introducing questions such as 'please tell me when you first started working in the gig economy'; follow up questions where participants are asked to elaborate on a previous response; probing questions where a direct question is asked in response to something the participant has said; specifying questions about a specific event or incident; direct questions such as 'do you like your job'; indirect questions such as 'what do most people think about the way staff are treated and would you agree with this'; structuring questions which guide the discussion; silence which encourages reflection and; interpreting questions sought to verify the researchers interpretations throughout the course of the interview. The types of questions asked are likely to vary in accordance with the stages of the qualitative interview with Charmaz & Belgrave (2012) distinguishing between initial open ended questions (what was life like before), intermediate questions (what were the impacts of) and ending questions (do you still feel the same).

Due to the exploratory nature of the study, the types of questions used in interview are largely open ended in order to encourage descriptive insights. Probing questions are also used in order to follow up on any key points of interest and to encourage participants to elaborate on their responses, particularly in relation to their experiences of job quality components identified within the literature. Given the interpretive nature of the inquiry, the interview guide is intended not to be overly prescriptive providing flexibility in relation to the topics discussed and in response to what the interviewees say. The following table (Table 5.1) provides a non-exhaustive list of the types of questions asked during interview (A copy of the full interview guide can be seen in Appendix A2).

Topics Covered During Interview	**Example of Questions Asked**
Personal Background and Reasons for Undertaking Gig Work	1. Tell me a bit about your work history and how you ended up working for [platform].

	2. Did you apply for other jobs before you started working for [platform]? 3. Why are you still working for [platform] now?
Overall perception and Experiences of Gig Work	1. Tell me a bit about your current role and what an average day or week might be like for you. Is this consistent? 2. What aspects of gig work do you enjoy the most? 3. Do you see any disadvantages to working this way in comparison to other types of work? 4. Would you recommend working this way to a friend or family member?
Perception and Experiences of Key Job Quality Components	*Probing questions were used to explore subjective experiences of key job quality components including; wages and social benefits; job content (including the pace of work and meaningfulness); work autonomy; job security (type of contract and stability); training (formal and on the job); opportunities for advancement; safe working environment (physical work conditions and work-related risks); working hours (including distribution of working hours); social working environment and; participation.*
Perceived Impact of Technology on Quality of Work Experience	1. Tell me about how the application works.

	2. How do you feel about working through an app on your phone? 3. Do you think there are any benefits or downsides to working this way?
Future Ambitions of Gig Workers	1. What are your plans over the next 5 years? 2. Do you think you will continue to use the platform to find work?

Table 5.1 – Example Interview Questions

5.4.2 Sampling and Recruitment

Following a decision to adopt a qualitative interview approach, it becomes necessary to consider the number of participants who will be included in the investigation as well as the logic and methods used in recruiting interviewees. The selection of participants for qualitative research is said to be a challenging endeavour but should be based upon 'the opportunity to learn' in regards to improving understanding, developing contentions and transforming generalisations (Stake, 2005). Whilst quantitative research often employs sampling logic and the use of statistical criteria in order to draw a sample which can be said to be representative of a population (Cooper, et al., 2013), within qualitative research findings are intended to generalise to theory as opposed to populations (Mitchell, 1983), thus requiring a different approach to sampling. Thus, typically, the number of participants in a qualitative study is less than in a survey but the level of detail and description is much greater (Bryman, 2012). Whilst some authors recommend participants are added until the point of theoretical saturation or redundancy (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) others have recommended minimum sample size with too small a sample making it difficult to generate theory (Eisenhardt, 1989) whilst too large a sample may become difficult to manage and construct into a meaningful narrative (Hartley, 1994). As a rule, the broader the scope of the qualitative study and the more comparisons between groups in the sample that are required, the greater the number of interviews which will be needed with between 20-30 interviews generally representing the minimum required to support convincing conclusions (although there are some exceptions such as when life story interviews are undertaken) (Bryman, 2012).

In light of debates concerning the appropriate number of participants to be included, thirty-two face to face interviews were conducted, ensuring enough data is provided to support theory generation whilst also ensuring the data did not become unmanageable (Miles, et al., 2014). Interviews were conducted in public places such as a local café and ranged in length from between thirty to ninety minutes with an average length of fifty-one minutes. They were recorded via a digital recorder and transcribed by the interviewer at a later date. For pragmatic reasons and due to the difficulties in accessing a largely dispersed workforce, a combination of recruitment methods were used. Interviewees were initially recruited through social media platforms populated by gig workers (for example, through Uber and Deliveroo forums on Facebook and through LinkedIn) as well as through flyering around 'hot spots' within the city centre which were identified by participants as being meeting points for workers. Subsequently, the snowball approach was used which involved asking interviewees to recommend a friend or colleague who also worked through a Smartphone app. In addition, interviewees from a hospitality platform were recruited directly through the platform app which they sought work through by posting a call for participants directly on the app.

The combination of recruitment methods allowed the interviewer to locate a significant number of gig workers across different platforms but who satisfied the criteria necessary for participation. In addition, it allowed for the recruitment of participants from different age groups and within different life cycle phases. This can assist in building knowledge as to how different members of the workforce evaluate job features and thus what factors should be emphasised in order to attract and retain a sustainable workforce. In addition, by exploring the divergence in experience across a heterogenous group of workers, an insight may be provided into potential labour market inequities in the gig economy and the nature and severity of the disadvantages faced by different population groups. The use of multiple cases or participants is also said to increase the chance for replication and thus yield a greater level of robustness and validity from the conclusions of the study, increasing the scope for analytical generalisations to be drawn (Robson, 2011).

In line with the exploratory nature of the study and to allow for an investigation of commonalities and divergences in individual experience within the gig economy as well as the reasons for this, participants for the study were drawn, not only from diverse backgrounds, but from three occupational sectors including taxi, courier and hospitality work. In addition to being representative of gig economy platforms in their provision and

organisation of work through a Smartphone application, the platforms from which participants were drawn were all personal service-based platforms operating in local labour markets (in this case Central Scotland). In addition, each platform provided 'entry level' occupations in that no prior experience was required in order to secure employment through the platform. Of the sample, ten interviews were conducted with individuals using courier delivery platforms such as Deliveroo, eleven with individuals operating through the taxi platforms such as Uber, and eleven with individuals undertaking hospitality work through platforms such as Gig. Participants ranged in age from 18-60 years with an average age of 34 years. The majority of participants were men (n=26). Efforts were made to recruit more women, but the eventual sample reflects how men are more likely to be involved in gig work (Balaram, et al., 2017). Of the sample, gig work was a supplementary source of income for fourteen participants and a primary source for eighteen participants, eight of which relied upon gig work as their singular source of income. Pseudonyms are used throughout the study in order to protect the identity of the participants. An overview of participant details including the type of platform they worked through and their age, is provided in Table 5.2.

Name (pseudonym)	Platform	Age range	Source of Income (Primary, Exclusive or Supplementary)
Jonny	Taxi	51-60	Supplementary
Gavin	Taxi	51-60	Supplementary
Leo	Taxi	21-30	Exclusive
David	Courier	21-30	Exclusive
Hamish	Courier	16-20	Supplementary
Kevin	Courier	21-30	Primary
Billy	Courier	21-30	Supplementary
George	Taxi	21-30	Supplementary
Jill	Courier	21-30	Supplementary
Joe	Taxi	51-60	Supplementary
Jenny	Courier	21-30	Exclusive
Michael	Taxi	41-50	Exclusive
Tony	Taxi	41-50	Supplementary
Peter	Taxi	51-60	Primary
Allan	Courier	21-30	Primary
Chris	Hospitality	21-30	Exclusive
Jay	Hospitality	21-30	Exclusive
Craig	Hospitality	31-40	Supplementary
Sam	Hospitality	21-30	Primary
Liam	Hospitality	31-40	Exclusive
Paul	Taxi + Courier	31-40	Primary
Josh	Hospitality	16-20	Supplementary
Wendy	Courier	21-30	Exclusive
Jacob	Hospitality	31-40	Primary
Alex	Hospitality	21-30	Primary
Will	Hospitality	21-30	Supplementary
Simon	Hospitality	31-40	Primary
Amy	Hospitality	21-30	Supplementary
John	Taxi	51-60	Supplementary
Sarah	Hospitality	21-30	Primary
Kirsty	Courier	16-20	Primary
Phil	Taxi	51-60	Supplementary

Table 5.2 - Participant Details

5.5 Data Analysis

Once data has been collected through the data collection techniques identified, the data must be analysed and interpreted in order to organise and obtain meaning from the large amount of information gathered. The purpose of data analysis is to make sense of the phenomena by interpreting the meaning given to it by participants (Creswell, 1994). Although a range of strategies for the analysis of qualitative data exist, the most frequently utilised approaches include analytic induction and grounded theory (Bryman, 2012). Both of these strategies, in contrast to approaches used in quantitative studies, can be described as iterative in that the relationship between data collection and analysis is not sequential with a period of analysis often shaping the next stage in data collection. Analytic induction is said to begin with the definition of the phenomenon to be explained and the examination of a small number of cases before proceeding to a hypothetical explanation of the problem and the pursuant collection of data (Hammersley, 2010). Where evidence of a case which is inconsistent with the hypothesis is found, the hypothesis will either be redefined, to exclude the anomaly, or reformulated so as to account for its occurrence. The formal objective of this approach is causal explanation however, it has been criticised for revealing the conditions which are sufficient for the occurrence of the phenomena rather than those which are necessary (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

Grounded theory, in contrast, implies the grounding of theory in data and, despite considerable controversy as to exactly what grounded theory is and the apparent divide between the Glaserian and Strausian approaches[12], it is broadly synonymous with the inductive approach to research. More specifically, grounded theory represents a set of procedures including the adoption of a theoretical approach to sampling, the coding of data as it is collected and the achievement of theoretical saturation in that no new codes emerge from continued data collection (Bryman, 2012). Despite the prominence of the grounded theory approach within qualitative research, it also faces a number of limitations being criticised for its naivety in assuming the feasibility of theory-neutral observation (Blumer, 1979). As an example, it is rare that a researcher would be granted the funding

[12] Glaser and Strauss are recognised as the founders of grounded theory publishing 'The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research' in 1967. However, the two have since developed different notions of grounded theory with Glaser criticising the seemingly prescriptive approach emphasised by Strauss in his 1987 book 'Qualitative Analysis for Social Scientists'.

to begin research without being able to outline the potential implications of the investigation thus requiring knowledge of what is already known.

Despite these criticisms, the core processes of grounded theory including coding, induction and reflection, underpin the majority of strategies used for conducting qualitative data analysis (Bryman, 2012).

One of the most commonly used qualitative data analysis techniques is thematic analysis. Thematic analysis, at its broadest level, represents a "method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within the data" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). Its origins are associated with more structured approaches such as Grounded theory discussed above, however, it is said to be less prescriptive and can be used in a broad range of epistemological positions (King, 2004). According to this framework, data analysis should begin through a process of familiarisation with the data prior to the generation of codes which can then be combined into broader patterns or 'themes' (Guest & Macqueen, 2011). These themes are said to have the potential to reveal commonalities, differences and paradoxes in the data, providing a rich and detailed account (King, 2004). It is this richness and depth of detail which this study hopes to provide, broadening understanding of job quality and gig work by exploring commonalities and variations in individuals experience and perceptions of working in the gig economy. As such, it is a form of thematic analysis which will be adopted in this study and which will be discussed in greater detail in the following section.

5.5.1 Template Analysis

Template analysis represents a form of thematic analysis which attempts to balance the need for both structure and flexibility in the process of analysing textual data (Crabtree & Miller, 1992). It provides a rigorous approach to the organisation and reduction of large amounts of textual data, presenting both a structure for the collection and analysis of data whilst also allowing for the inclusion of any valuable data categories which emerge during the data collection process (Waring & Wainwright, 2008). Central to template analysis is the aforementioned notion of coding. As highlighted above, coding is a central process in thematic analysis and represents the main starting point for most forms of qualitative data analysis (Bryman, 2008). Coding relates to the process of sorting large amounts of qualitative data into manageable chunks and involves the categorisation or labelling of the data set in accordance with themes which are relevant to the aims and objectives of the analysis and which are identified, either prior to data collection, being drawn from the

underlying theoretical framework, or, as is common in thematic approaches, are based upon themes which emerge during the data collection process (Watts, 2014).

Template analysis can be considered somewhat unique when it comes to coding in qualitative research due to its incorporation of aspects of priori coding, allowing codes to be drawn from the literature which relate to common or significant themes relevant to the topic of interest (King, 2004). The use of priori codes is said to be beneficial not only in providing a strong structure for the organisation and analysis of data but it also allows the researcher to see how often predicted themes occur (King & Brooks, 2016). This is particularly useful when evaluating job quality due to the multidimensional nature of the concept and the need to recognise the substantial literature base which underpins the design of the study and the conceptual framework being used. Template analysis also emphasises the development of post priori coding thus providing flexibility during data collection and allowing for the modification, addition or removal of codes which emerge as more or less important throughout this process (Crabtree & Miller, 1992). These codes can then be organised hierarchically and in accordance with their relevance to the specific aims and objectives outlined in this study allowing the researcher to classify and explore the different topics and dimensions of job quality, as well as the relationships between them.

There are a number of procedural steps associated with template analysis including: (i) becoming familiar with the accounts to be analysed e.g. by completing an initial read through of interview transcripts: (ii) Carrying out a preliminary coding highlighting any text which contributes to understanding. Tentative a priori codes may be used to identify text which may be helpful or relevant. (iii) Organising themes into meaningful clusters and defining how the different groupings relate to each other. (iv) Developing an initial coding template based upon the completion of the steps outlined above, on a subset of data. (v) Applying the initial template to a further data set and modifying, adding or removing themes in order to appropriately account for data relevant to the research objectives and (vi) applying the refined template to the full data set (King, 2012).

In accordance with the conceptual framework outlined in Section 4.7, a tentative coding template was constructed a-priori based upon the following dimensions of job quality: wages and social benefits; job content (including the pace of work and meaningfulness); work autonomy; job security (type of contract and stability); training (formal and on the job); opportunities for advancement; safe working environment (physical work

conditions and work-related risks); working hours (including distribution of working hours); social working environment; participation; technology and; individual differences. The coding template was revised throughout the data collection process and depending on the common themes which emerged, codes were amended, removed and, in some cases, added. For example, one theme which emerged during interview was the temporal nature of job quality and the perceived lack of sustainability associated with working in the gig economy over the longer term. Opportunities for advancement was also amended in accordance with participants subjective experience, incorporating a number of sub-themes including opportunities for networking, entrepreneurship and longer-term career prospects. This adaptive process represents a key strength of template analysis with deductive codes helping to provide focus for the researcher and strengthen the link with existing theory, but which remain flexible in accordance with inductive themes emerging directly from the data. A more detailed overview of the coding framework used within this study is provided in Appendix A3.

5.6 Evaluating Qualitative Research

The final stage of methodological consideration relates to the verification of the findings of the analysis and consideration of the extent to which these can be deemed valid and reliable (Bryman & Bell, 2015). There is a growing debate over how social research should be evaluated and, in particular, whether the criteria used for evaluating quantitative research, such as validity and reliability, remain applicable within the qualitative domain. For example, the notions of reliability and replicability are predominantly concerned with the adequacy of measures thus having a more obvious application in consideration of quantitative research. Similarly, external validity and the emphasis on the creation of a representative sample is likely to be of greater importance for those undertaking quantitative research and seeking to generalise findings across social settings (Bryman, 2012).

However, despite ongoing controversy as to the applicability of quantitatively grounded evaluative criteria within qualitative research, generalisability, validity and reliability can be said to broadly represent the basis upon which researchers should regard a piece of research as ‘knowledge’ which can be assimilated within a specific field of study (Rowley, 2002; Mason, 1996).

One such approach put forward by Lincoln and Guba (1985) proposes that, instead of assessing qualitative research against quantitative criteria such as reliability and validity,

qualitative research should be assessed against its levels of 'trustworthiness' and 'authenticity'. Each aspect of trustworthiness has an equivalent criterion in quantitative research including: credibility (internal validity) and the extent to which the findings are believable; transferability (external validity) and whether the findings are applicable in another context; dependability (reliability) and whether the findings are likely to apply at other times and; confirmability (objectivity) and the extent to which the researchers own values and beliefs have influenced the findings (Bryman & Bell, 2015). This is supplemented by authenticity criteria which consider issues concerning the wider political impact of research and include: fairness for example, in the representation of different viewpoints; ontological authenticity in considering whether the research helps members better understand their social setting; educative authenticity in considering whether the research helps members better appreciate the perspectives of others; catalytic authenticity in relation to whether the research has provided an impetus for members to engage in action for change; and tactical authenticity in relation to whether the research has empowered members to take action (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Within this approach, the overall emphasis is on producing evidence that the interpretation of the researcher provides a trustworthy and authentic representation of reality (Bryman, 2012).

A number of strategies have been proposed in order to improve the 'trustworthiness' of qualitative research. One of the most commonly used techniques to increase the trustworthiness, and in particular the credibility of research findings, is respondent validation (Bryman, 2008). Respondent validation relates to the process in which participants are provided with an account of the research findings in order to seek confirmation that the researchers findings are consistent with the views of those whom the research is conducted on (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Whilst this can assist in ensuring the researcher has correctly understood the social world, there remain a number of practical difficulties associated with this process. For example, participants may become defensive resulting in a censorship of information or conversely, may develop a level of personal affection with the researcher resulting in artificial levels of compliance (Bryman, 2012). Despite these limitations and in order to increase the credibility of the research, the researcher fed back to participants, as part of an iterative process, assumptions and early findings related to the quality of work (e.g. a number of participants have mentioned issues of wage instability, is this something that has affected you?/you mentioned earlier that your wages fluctuate, is this something which presents a challenge for you?) in order

to seek confirmation that these findings were congruent with the views of the participant and to seek out areas in which there was a lack of consensus and the reasons for this.

Another important aspect of qualitative research criterion is the issue of generalisability or transferability of findings to a different context. The generalisation of the study's findings so that they can be said to contribute to theory is crucial and is achieved when the study is appropriately informed by theory and thus can be seen to validly add to that theory (Ghauri & Gronhog, 2010). Generalisation within qualitative research relies upon analytical, as opposed to statistical generalisation, in which an established theory is used as a template against which the empirical results of the study can be compared (Mitchell, 1983). Thus, the goal is to expand and generalise theories as opposed to enumerating frequencies as in the case of statistical generalisation (Yin, 2009). As part of this study, the results from the data collection phase are compared against current theories of job quality in order to explore the extent to which these theories can help us to understand gig work and the impact of changes in the nature of work on individuals work experience.

The final two criteria used in the evaluation of the research's trustworthiness relate to issues of dependability and confirmability. Dependability equates to reliability within quantitative research and is concerned with procedural precision and the extent to which the operations of a study, such as the data collection, can be repeated with the same results (Bryman, 2012). Good record keeping, and the appropriate documentation of procedures are said to be central in demonstrating the reliability of a study (Rowley, 2002). Thus, in order to deliver dependability, records were kept of each stage of the research process including in relation to the review of the literature, the formulation of the research objectives and the design of the study, the selection of participants and during the collection of data. This allows readers to judge independently the researcher's interpretation of the data.

By documenting the research process and creating what can be referred to as an 'audit trail' (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), the researcher can also improve levels of confirmability. Confirmability, whilst recognising that complete objectivity is impossible in social research, is concerned with recognising and minimising the extent to which the researcher's personal values or theoretical inclinations are allowed to influence the research and it findings (Bryman, 2012). The increased awareness of the importance of issues of confirmability can be said to have arisen largely out of a greater awareness of the role of the researcher in the construction of knowledge. Indeed, confirmability can

be associated with the closely related concept of 'reflexivity' and the need for researchers to be reflective about the implications of their background, values, biases, and position, for the knowledge they generate (Neuman, 2013). Thus, in addition to documenting the research process, a reflexive journal was recorded in which the researcher documented prior assumptions, feelings and comments related to one's own performance throughout the study, aiding the process of self-reflection in considering the impact of researcher involvement on the research outcomes.

5.7 Research Ethics

Research ethics are a necessary consideration in any research project and relate to the maintenance of a certain standard of behaviour when undertaking research activities (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004). In order to satisfy the ethical standards outlined by the UK Research Council and to ensure risk of harm to participants is minimised when conducting research, a number of key ethical issues are considered when undertaking fieldwork.

A core principle central to ethical research practice is the avoidance of harm and the protection of the safety and well-being of participants (Wiles, 2013). It is important that participation presents no more than a minimal risk of harm to participants and that these risks have been identified and explained to the individual prior to their involvement in the study (Bryman, 2012). Whilst interviews, may pose only minimal risks to participants, particularly in relation to physical harm, consideration should be given for the potential for the interviewee to become upset or distressed and the risks posed to psychological well-being, particularly where the topics are of a 'sensitive' nature due to their focus on personal or controversial issues (Lee, 1993). An example in consideration of the current study could be in relation to issues of financial difficulty or in asking participants to reveal personal details about their life outside of work. In discussing such issues, the researcher reminded the respondent that all responses will be anonymised and that they did not have to answer any question they would prefer not to in order to ensure any disclosure was made voluntarily and to reduce the risk of the participant experiencing any anxiety as to how this information may be used. Research may also engender other emotional responses such as anxiety or humiliation and participants may feel deceived or devalued depending upon the extent to which they feel they have been informed of the true purpose of the research or that their views have been taken seriously (Wiles, 2013). In order to minimise the potential risk of harm to participants, the researcher remained sensitive to the participants feelings, addressing any potential risks to well-being as they emerged

throughout the research process and ensuring participants did not feel pressured to discuss specific issues.

In addition to considering the potential risks for the participant, it is important to ensure that consideration of the potential for risk of harm to the researcher is not neglected (Bloor, et al., 2007). Whilst the risk of physical harm is likely to be minimal, it is important such issues are considered in relation to such things as the location of interviews and the selection of participants. Although the context for the current study was unlikely to give rise to either ambient or situational danger, in order to minimise the potential risk of harm to the researcher, interviews were conducted in a public place such as a small café, with details of the interview times and locations left with a colleague.

In addition to risks related to physical harm, the arguably greater risk to individuals undertaking qualitative research is that of emotional harm (Bryman, 2012). Due to the empathetic nature of qualitative research, listening to participants experiences of hardship or deprivation may leave researchers feeling emotionally distressed (Bloor, et al., 2007) Emotional difficulties may also arise due to feelings of isolation when undertaking fieldwork particularly in the case of PhD students who often work alone in the field (Wiles, 2013). Strategies proposed for managing the risks of emotional harm include; the maintenance of a reflexive journal, ensuring an opportunity for debriefing is provided either with the supervisory team or other peers and maintaining a balance between time spent in the field and time spent with research supervisors (ibid). Each of these strategies were employed by the researcher for the purposes of this study.

A further key ethical consideration relevant to this study related to the payment of research subjects for the time taken to partake in the study. There remains considerable controversy over the ethical appropriateness of monetary gain within participant research. For example, concerns have been raised over the use of financial incentives due to the undue influence these may have on the quality of data and the potentially coercive nature of these offers, undermining the principle of voluntary participation (Miller & Bell, 2002). However, it is argued that there are occasions where it may be ethically appropriate to offer payment to research participants for example, to compensate for the loss or cost a person might incur in a given situation (including out of pocket expenses such as travel fares) or for the effort expended, such as the time and effort spent during interview (Gelianas, et al., 2018). In addition, it has been put forward that making payments can be a means of 'beginning to equalise' the imbalance of power that exists between interviewer

and interviewee, accounting for the fact that researchers themselves are likely to receive compensation in the form of wages or other rewards (Thompson, 1996; Head, 2009).

Due to the precarity of work-life in the gig economy and in recognition of the fact that, for many working this way, time is often money, it was considered appropriate that a token gift of compensation be awarded to participants. The provision of compensation remains conducive with the principle of beneficence and the obligation of the researcher to maximise benefits for the individual and/or society, whilst also minimizing the risk of harm to the participant (Grant & Sugarman, 2004). By providing compensation, the researcher recognises the time and burden of participation in the study (such as the need to travel to a mutually convenient location and the length of the interview). In balancing this against the ethical implications associated with the payment or reward of research subjects and, and in order to ensure participants and in particular those from financially disadvantaged groups, do not feel obliged to participate for financial reasons, the compensation was limited to a token gift of a £10 Amazon voucher. Vouchers were selected as opposed to cash to ensure participants benefits/tax payments would not be affected. Participants were also informed prior to the study that the token gift of compensation in no way effected their right to withdraw from the study at any time and was merely a note of appreciation for the time taken to take part in the interview.

A further important ethical consideration when undertaking research involving human participants is participant anonymity and data confidentiality (Neuman, 2013). The individual's rights to privacy with regards to confidentiality of information and how this is maintained, represents a core principle of research ethics (Cornstock, 2013). As such, during this study, personal information such as the participants name and address have been treated as confidential and data from interviews handled in accordance with provisions contained in the General Data Protection Regulations 2018.

Informed consent is a further central concept in the ethical practice of research and represents a core principle in the professional guidelines applicable to social scientists (Wiles, 2013). Informed consent relates to the provision of sufficient information to the participant to allow them to make an informed decision as to whether they wish to be part of the study and any potential risks involved with participation (Wilson, 2014). Specifically, research participants should be made aware of: the nature and purpose of the research; whether it is funded and who by; what will happen with the findings of the research and how these will be disseminated; what their participation in the study will

involve and the associated risk; how issues of anonymity and confidentiality will be managed and; their right to withdraw from the study should they later change their mind about participating (Wiles, 2013). In addition to providing this information to participants to ensure they understood the aims of the project prior to undertaking interviews, participants were asked to sign a consent form to confirm they were fully informed of what participation in the study involved and to indicate their voluntary participation in the research.

Prior to undertaking field work, consent was also obtained from the University's Research Ethics Committee. The legal and ethical regulations outlined by the Ethics Committee have been considered and adhered to in the design and construction of the study.

5.8 Conclusion

The purpose of the chapter was to outline and discuss the methodological choices which underpin the current investigation into the quality of gig work considering issues related to research philosophy and data collection methods and providing justification for the approach adopted as part of this study. The chapter began by discussing, in general terms, philosophical debates related to the nature of being and knowing, outlining different research paradigms in order to identify a framework which complements the nature of enquiry. Given the exploratory nature of the study and the focus upon the lived experience of gig work, the interpretive paradigm was identified as the framework for this study. In reflecting upon the philosophical assumptions which underpin the interpretivist paradigm and in order to provide for a more holistic understanding of the dynamics and nuances of job quality in the gig economy, a qualitative approach is adopted, exploring, through the use of semi-structured interviews, individuals experiences and perceptions of their work in the gig economy. In addition, in order to organise and make sense of the data generated through interviews, template analysis will be used. This method of data analysis utilises both priori and post priori coding, allowing for data to be easily organised in accordance with the dimensions of job quality identified in Chapter 4, whilst also providing flexibility during the data collection process to add, modify or remove codes based upon their relevance or importance to the participants.

Finally, the evaluative criteria used in assessing the quality of findings and the ethical issues associated with this particular study and the research process more generally, were also discussed and strategies employed in order to maintain the trustworthiness of the research and to minimise any potential risk of harm to participants, were identified. A key

issue to arise during this discussion related to the ethical implications associated with the payment or non-payment of participants. Upon reflection of the underlying arguments and in recognition of the precarious nature of gig work and the time and effort expended in order to partake in an interview, it was deemed ethically appropriate to offer a small token gift of compensation by way of a £10 amazon voucher. In the following chapters the evidence gathered during the data collection phase will first be presented, before being used to inform discussions related to the quality of work in the gig economy.

Chapter 6 - Individuals Experiences and Perceptions of Key Job Quality Components

6.0 Introduction

In the previous chapter, research design and methodology were discussed in relation to the objectives set out in Section 1.3, but also relating to key issues emergent in chapters 2 to 4. This chapter (Chapter 6) and the following chapter (Chapter 7) represents two sets of findings from interviews with gig workers on the matter of job quality. Whilst the first chapter provides an overview of individuals experiences and perceptions of key dimensions of job quality included within the conceptual framework outlined in Chapter 4, the second chapter presents findings related to how individual and technological factors shape and influence these experiences and individuals perception of gig work (objectives 2 and 3) providing a more holistic understanding of job quality and gig work. To this end, the following Chapter provides an analysis of the findings related to research objective one (examining the extent to which individual's experiences and perceptions of gig work are consistent with current notions of good work). As such, participants subjective experiences of key job quality components outlined within the conceptual framework identified in Section 4.7, are considered, including in regards: to wages and employment benefits; job security; working hours; physical work environment and work related risks; job content; work autonomy; training; opportunities for advancement; social working environment and; participation. Although the evidence is presented as if the quality of work experience was made up of a number of distinct features, in reality there are areas of overlap with distinctions made primarily to provide structure to the discussion and to increase the scope for comparative analysis.

6.1 Wages and Employment Benefits

6.1.1 Wages

The first job quality dimension to be examined is that of wages and income. Individuals experience of pay varied in accordance with a range of factors including, the nature of the work, the payment system (whether hourly or per job), the extent to which this income represented a primary or sole source of income, personal financial literacy and prior work experience. To this end, variations were found in the earning opportunities and levels of take home pay available to individuals working through different platforms due to the different ways in which the platforms are organised. For example, whilst some participants operating through the taxi platforms reported opportunities for high earnings,

these same opportunities did not exist for courier and hospitality workers. Similarly, whilst hospitality workers were paid on a shift by shift basis at a rate per hour of no less than £8 (slightly above that of the national minimum wage), taxi and courier workers were paid on a task by task basis resulting in greater levels of wage fluctuation.

As such, the following section begins with a more detailed overview of the variations in payment systems employed by the different types of platform and the impact on individual's experiences of pay before considering the commonalities in experience for workers from different platforms. The final part of the section discusses individuals' access to employment benefits and the perceived impact upon the outcomes of job quality including individual satisfaction and well-being.

6.1.1.1 Taxi Platforms

For workers operating through taxi platforms, levels of take-home pay fluctuated significantly in accordance with such things as consumer demand and the costs of maintaining and licensing the vehicle. Whilst it was possible to achieve upwards of £200 on a Saturday evening with some workers evidencing an average take home pay of £700-£800 a week, high earnings were commonly associated with long working hours and the need to work 'peak times' such as Friday and Saturday nights, in order to achieve a sustainable income. For example, one participant who reported earnings of £200 a day indicated that this was based upon 10 hours of driving time which, once factoring in unpaid time between pick-ups, amounted to 13 hours shifts. In addition, within the taxi sector in particular, work-related costs had a significant impact on income with issues of vehicle licensing, maintenance and insurance reducing the level of take-home pay. An example of the impact of costs on individuals' levels of take-home pay is demonstrated in the following quote:

> It is not economically viable. Because the fares are so cheap, you don't make a lot of money. Some of the guys will tell you that they pulled in £200 or £300 but what they won't tell you that it cost about that much to keep the car on the road. There's fuel, wear and tear, insurance, depreciation, when you factor all that in there is no money in it. I paid £20,000 for my car which is now worth about £6000, I've done about 50,000 miles in 18 months. If you factor in that cost, I've probably made minus quite a lot (Peter, taxi, age 51-60).

Further to this, whilst some participants owned the equipment required to operate through the platforms, others rented the equipment again impacting levels of take-home pay. Whilst the rental agreement often mitigated the risk of maintenance costs, the requirement

to pay a weekly rental fee (in relation to taxi work this fee averaged at around £200 a week) presented a financial commitment which reduced the autonomy of these workers to work when they wanted and contributed to higher levels of job dissatisfaction. For example, one participant described how they felt they had been misled in relation to the earnings available through the taxi platform and the impact of having to rent a car on the ability to work when you wanted:

> I honestly feel exploited. It wasn't what I expected, and I spent a lot of money to get my car ready and licensed to be told that I couldn't use it on their app so I have been renting a car off one of the rental guys. Renting gives you a certain anxiety because if something happens to the car…. The money is ok but the work when you want ethos is just not true (George, taxi, age 21-30).

Despite variations in earning and individual levels of wage satisfaction, the payment system used within the gig economy was commonly identified as a key benefit of platform-based work for those operating through the taxi platforms. Indeed, although the rate of commission was perceived as being too high, a number of respondents referred to the benefits of operating through the commission-based payment system on the apps (which takes a percentage of each fare) as opposed to the rental system employed by the majority of traditional private hire firms (where workers pay a fixed fee per week in order to get work through the firm). An example of the perceived benefits associated with the payment system used by the taxi platforms is demonstrated in the following quote from a participant who had previously worked for a traditional private hire firm:

> It's better for me because of my reduced mobility [so] some weeks I might not be able to do as much driving and with the old firm I would still have the £140 to pay them each week so not driving wasn't an option. [The platform] take 25% on each job you do which, don't get me wrong, is quite a whack but if I'm only able to work a couple of hours that week or not at all, at least I haven't lost anything (John, taxi, age 51-60).

Similarly, the imposition of 'surge pricing' during periods of high demand was also viewed positively by participants who would be paid extra for jobs undertaken during these times contributing to increased opportunities for high earnings. However, whilst the payment system used by the taxi apps was generally perceived positively, the operation of the cashless system (e.g. where payments are made exclusively through the app), whilst contributing to a perceived increase in safety as discussed in Section 7.4, had a negative impact on customers propensity to tip which may negatively impact

take home pay. Similarly, despite the benefits associated with the 'surge' pricing system, all of the participants operating across the taxi platforms expressed dissatisfaction with minimum fares which could be as little as £2.50, a rate lower than the cost of completing the job. The lack of transparency over customers end destinations and thus the inability to avoid these jobs further contributed to levels of dissatisfaction over minimum fare rates.

6.1.1.2 Courier Platforms

Courier workers reported, on average, the lowest earnings per hour across the various platforms and were most likely to express dissatisfaction with wage levels. Whilst one of the participants was paid on an hourly basis due to the interception of a third party between worker and platform, the majority of courier workers were paid on a 'per drop' basis with a small payment made for each task in a delivery including collection, distance travelled and delivery. Whilst this piece rate payment system was similar to the one applied in regards to taxi work, the time per task for courier workers was often longer and paid at a lower rate than taxi work limiting the earning potential for these workers and making it harder to 'clock up the hours'. An example of the rates of pay provided to courier workers is demonstrated in the following quote:

> You get paid about £2 when you pick up the food. So, say the customer pays a tenner we get maybe 75% of that and we get all the tips. So, for that order I would maybe get £13 if I get a £2 tip. I'm a bit slow so Ill maybe only get one done in an hour. They might pay surge as well so if its busy the customer will pay more and the rates are a bit higher (Hamish, courier, age 18-20).

With courier workers subject to more concentrated periods of consumer demand due to the absence of 24/7 service provision and the concentration of work around mealtimes, they faced the highest risk of going out to work without being paid. Indeed, a number of respondents reported occasions where they had ended up making less than the national minimum wage per hour due to an imbalance between supply and demand. An example of this is demonstrated in the following quote:

> I would normally do 2 or 3 hours and maybe on a good day you could do 5 or 6 drops in 2 hours so that was like £25 for a couple hours of work, plus tips. But sometimes nothing would come through and I would cycle around for half an hour and get nothing (Billy, courier, age 21-30).

In addition, whilst the costs for those operating through the taxi platforms were highest, courier workers also reported the impact of additional costs such as the need to cover the cost of equipment maintenance and acquire additional data, remote battery chargers and in some cases, a higher performing phone. An example of the impact of costs is demonstrated in the following quote from a full-time courier worker:

> Wear and tear on the bike. That was the main downside for me. It was my personal bike as well so tyres go more often and you end up putting more money into your bike and then of course that comes off your wages at the end of the month so it's less take-home pay. So, when you take off insurance, cost of maintenance, extra fuel and extra data for your phone. It does kind of whittle down your earnings (David, courier, age 21-30).

6.1.1.3 Hospitality Platforms

In relation to hospitality work, although the rate of pay varied according to the specific nature of the task and the rate offered by the end user, these participants were least vulnerable to issues of wage insecurity due to the payment for work on an hourly basis and at a guaranteed rate no lower than £8 per hour. In addition, in contrast to taxi and courier workers, hospitality workers were able to see the rate offered and the total levels of earnings available for a job before applying through the app. Thus, despite the limitations on the upper threshold of earnings due to the imposition of an hourly rate, hospitality workers reported the highest levels of wage satisfaction and were least likely to report take home earnings below the national minimum wage.

In addition, participants working through the hospitality platform were most likely to report that the wage levels provided were comparable, or in some cases better, than those provided for similar work but through alternative employment arrangements (e.g. whether employed on a permanent or casual basis). An example of this is demonstrated in the following quote:

> Sometimes you find [the wages] are actually better. I get paid £8.75 an hour for a supervisor shift through the app which is fine. I've seen permanent general manager jobs advertised for £19,000 a year for a 45-hour week which works out at barely £8 an hour (Liam, hospitality worker, age 31-40).

6.1.2 Overall Wage Satisfaction and Wage Volatility

Overall, the majority of participants from across the platforms indicated that, whilst pay rates could be higher, they were largely satisfied with the pay received for their work in the gig economy and that this was consistent with expectations regarding pay levels for

the type of work undertaken. However, despite these seemingly high levels of wage satisfaction and acceptance, there was a general perception that wage levels were not sufficient as a sole source of income. An example of this is demonstrated in the following quote from an individual who was working through a hospitality app in order to boost income during a period of low demand for their self-owned business:

> I think it's good for what it is for short term. I don't think people should rely on it. I hope people don't use this as a long-term career. You can't live off £8.75 an hour (Will, hospitality, age 21-30).

Similarly, a second respondent working through a taxi platform in order to supplement pension benefits and earnings from their consultancy business stated:

> I don't think Uber was ever designed for full time work. It was designed for people like me who have a bit of spare time and a car to get out. But the problem is people are coming in trying to make a full time living and that's where the frustration comes into it because you just can't (Phil, taxi, age 51-60).

Furthermore, despite variations in payment systems and wage rates across the different platforms, a key issue shared by gig workers were the high levels of wage volatility as a result of fluctuations in demand with a number of respondents referring to the challenges associated with not knowing how much you might earn that day or how long it would take you to earn it. An example of the impact of these high levels of income volatility is demonstrated in the following quote:

> Sometimes it can be quite depressing if you take a dip in earnings. Like two weeks ago I was having bother with my legs and I'm just feeling the effects of that now in my wages and it does get you down. It's worse when you are putting in the hours as well but not getting the work either cos its quieter or there are more drivers (Peter, taxi, age 51-60).

The impact of wage volatility on the outcomes of job quality including individuals financial well-being and levels of job satisfaction was influenced by individual circumstances and the extent to which income generated in the gig economy represented a primary or supplementary source of income as well as the extent to which the individual depended upon this income in order to cover living expenses. For example, those working in the gig economy in order to 'top up' income or who had a cushion in the form of personal savings or a higher earning family member, were less vulnerable to issues of

wage volatility in comparison to individuals who relied upon their income from gig work in order to cover living expenses such as food and rent. The latter group were more likely to report negative outcomes including wage dissatisfaction, anxiety regarding pay and difficulties, in 'keeping their head above water'. An example of the challenges associated with wage volatility and fluctuations in demand can be seen in the following quote from a full-time taxi driver:

> January and February is really quiet so you are making well below what you can live on then by March you are starting to pull it back, chasing your tail, then by October things start to quiet down again and you start to feel the stress of Christmas. I have had times when I have had to borrow money before to get by. But then you have to pay that back as well (Jonny, taxi, age 51-60).

Issues of individual fit and the impact on the outcomes and perceived importance of job quality dimensions are considered in greater detail in Chapter 7.

6.1.3 Access to Employment Benefits

Incorporated within the dimension of wages and income is the issue of access provided to key social and employment benefits including, for example, sickness pay and workplace pension schemes.

Due to the nature of the contractual arrangements within the gig economy and the legal status of participants as either 'workers' or 'self-employed', participants had limited access to key employment benefits with all participants denied rights to sick pay. In addition, those who were contracted as 'self-employed' had few employment rights beyond those relating to discrimination and health and safety at work with these workers not being in receipt of holiday pay in addition to not having access to a workplace pension scheme. The absence of these benefits and in particular the lack of sick pay are likely to compound issues of wage instability and financial risk, particularly for those who depend upon their income from gig work as a primary or sole source of income with a number of participants indicating that they did not know what they would do if they became ill or were unable to work due to injury. One participant stated:

> If I broke my ankle I would be out of work and I don't know what I would do. It would get pretty bad pretty quickly. There is a worry if something happened and I couldn't cycle, it would actually be pretty bad because I would have to find a new job but there would be no buffering money, I have no savings (Wendy, courier, age 21-30).

However, despite recognising the difficulties associated with a lack of sick pay, the absence of employment benefits appeared to have been largely normalised by participants and was commonly perceived as a necessary or worthwhile trade-off for additional flexibility. An example of this trade-off is demonstrated in the following quote:

> I've been away on holiday and when I'm away I don't earn so I've lost a few days income but it's a trade-off for the flexibility (Jenny, courier, age 21-30).

To this end, a number of participants raised concerns over the potential erosion of the positive aspects of working in the gig economy as a result of a change to full employee status which would see work-related benefits extended to this group of workers. This is highlighted in the following quote*:*

> I believe the government issue is one most [workers] don't understand completely. Yes they like the sound of higher pay, sick pay, paid holidays, etc. but they don't understand that will change the reason they like working [this way] in the first place. If government rules kick in and they start oversight of how [we] are classified, this could end our being able to choose the jobs we want to take. Now I'm not saying some of the changes wouldn't be good with more worker benefits. But with every give there is a take (Gavin, taxi, age 51-60).

In addition, the perceived importance of these benefits also varied in accordance with individual circumstances and the preferences of the worker. For example, one respondent was semi-retired and drove for a taxi platform in their spare time stated:

> It suits employers cos its low cost and it suits me cos of the flexibility of it, I wouldn't want to be employed, there's no point in me being employed, I'm not really interested in sick pay and all the rest of it (Phil, taxi, age 51-60).

Similarly, the majority of participants appeared unconcerned about not having a workplace pension scheme. This was most commonly due to the temporary or supplementary nature of their employment within the gig economy or the individual's life stage with a number of younger participants indicating that it was not something they had thought about. In addition, a small number of respondents reported having alternative plans for supporting themselves in later life through, for example, investment in property.

6.2 Job Security

The next dimension of job quality to be examined relates to the level of job security experienced by workers, not only in regard to their formal levels of job security arising from their contractual status but also in relation to the perceived levels of security.

All participants in the study were contracted on a self-employed or worker basis and thus had no formal job security in terms of ongoing availability of work. In addition, several participants had also experienced periods of temporary unemployment due to issues with work dependent equipment, technological issues, fluctuations in demand and temporary deactivation. However, the extent to which participants felt vulnerable because of this lack of contractual security varied significantly and was impacted by such things as the individual's level of dependence on any one platform, the perceived ongoing availability of work, the level of perceived risk of deactivation and individual circumstance such as personal preference, life-stage and financial literacy (see Chapter 7).

Indeed, despite the contractual insecurity associated with gig work, some respondents reported feeling a sense of security due to the ease of access to work within the gig economy and the perception that such work will continue to be available for the foreseeable future. An example of this is demonstrated in the following quote from one participant who operated through multiple platforms:

> I work through three platforms; they aren't all going to sack me unless I do something really really bad and get banned from driving or something. Even then I would be alright. I might not know what I'm doing next week or not necessarily next month, but I'll have something (Paul, taxi and courier, age 31-40).

Some respondents similarly referred to gig work as being equally or more secure than traditional employment due to the perceived success and expected continuity of platform companies. For example, one participant who worked in the gig economy in order to supplement their income from their full-time occupation within a large clothes retailer stated:

> The good thing about the gig economy is you don't have to worry about redundancy in a way. After seeing House of Fraser and all the stories in the media you can't help but feel a bit anxious if you work in retail. These apps aren't going anywhere (Jill, courier, age 21-30).

In addition to the perceived sense of job security as a result of the accessible nature of gig work, participants were also provided a broader sense of income and life security due to the open-ended nature of employment in the gig economy and the availability of gig work as a means of generating supplementary income in times of financial hardship or whilst in pursuit of broader career aspirations. For example, one respondent operating though a hospitality platform stated:

> If you have that little panic and you need a cash instalment and you can see right there that you know, work is available and you aren't going to be poor for ever kind of thing. It's reassuring in a way (Sarah, hospitality, age 21-30).

However, in spite of the perceived sense of security reported by participants, the lack of formal job security contributed to the perception of gig work as unsustainable over the longer term with a number of respondents referring to the need to find more 'permanent' or 'consistent' forms of employment in the future. Issues related to the temporal aspects of job quality are considered in greater detail in Chapter 7.

6.3 Working Hours and Flexibility

The third dimension of job quality to be examined relates to working hours including the number of hours worked and the distribution of these hours.

The number of hours worked by participants varied considerably ranging anywhere from a few hours a week to 60 hours a week and were dependent on such things as; the extent to which the participant depended upon their income from their work within the gig economy, other commitments such as family or study, and the availability of work. In addition, despite evidence of restrictions to working time in some cases (e.g. through the allocation of 'shifts' on certain courier or hospitality platforms or through the restriction from using taxi apps for more than ten hours within a twenty-four hour period), the average number of hours of continuous work was also highly variable with some respondents expressing concern over the potential dangers associated with excessive working hours. For example, one participant operating through a taxi platform stated:

> The app only counts your time driving. So you only do 10 hours of driving but someone could be in their car for 16 hours. The assumption I guess is that they are resting in between but how do they monitor that? It's dangerous for all of us if people are doing long shifts and not resting (Jonny, taxi, age 51-60).

In addition to concerns over long working hours, inconsistencies in the availability and reliability of work had a significant impact on the quality of work experience for individuals in the gig economy with a large number of participants referring to the challenges associated with a fluctuating work week. For example, one participant operating through a courier platform stated:

> Even though it's great when you can pick and choose it's not so good if you need to do say so many hours and those hours just aren't available (David, courier, age 21-30).

This instability and uncertainty over working hours was cited by several respondents as one of the main disadvantages of working in the gig economy and also contributed to the perception of gig work as an inadequate alternative to more traditional forms of permanent employment over the longer term. An example of this is demonstrated in the following quote:

> If I could make up my own hours from it and decide when I work and there were so many options where I could just pick, in an ideal world I would love it because I've never really enjoyed the idea that you are with one agency or one job but there just aren't enough hours to be able to consistently rely on it (Josh, hospitality age 16-20).

In addition, although those undertaking platform work as a supplementary form of income were affected less by issues of fluctuation in the availability of working hours, a number of these respondents indicated that between their jobs they were working up to as much as 80 hours a week raising serious concerns regarding the potential for job burnout.

6.3.1 Flexibility and the Distribution of Working Hours

In spite of significant variations in the number of hours worked by individuals on a daily and weekly basis, flexibility over when, how long and how often to work was cited as a key benefit of gig work by all of the participants interviewed. In addition, flexibility was also one of the most commonly cited motivations for working in the gig economy with nearly 80% of participants identifying this as a key reason for working this way as opposed to seeking alternative forms of employment. An example of the flexibility as a reason for working in the gig economy is demonstrated in the following quote:

> I believe the main reason most people drive for Uber or similar rideshare companies is the flexibility. You are never committed to driving a shift or to fill in for someone else. You

> drive whenever you feel like it and you drive wherever you want to drive. I love the ability to just jump in my vehicle and to go make money when I need it. I may be bored one night and instead of wasting time watching TV I decide to go drive for a few hours and make some money (Gavin, taxi, age 51-60).

In addition to representing a motivating factor for undertaking gig work, flexibility in relation to both hours and patterns of work was perceived by a large number of respondents as being a key benefit of working this way, providing opportunities to work for individuals unable to commit to more permanent or consistent forms of employment due to, for example, caring responsibilities, educational or work-related commitments, or health related issues. For example, one participant who had previously been employed by a traditional courier company stated:

> I became quite unwell back in December and I ended up being on the sick until March and then we had a big discussion and it was 'you have 3 months left, either you go back to work or your done on the sick'. So I knew [my health issues] were gonna go on for a while and I decided it was better if I just looked for something else, something that worked better for me and could fit in round my health so when I heard about [the taxi platform] I thought that sounds perfect (Michael, taxi, age 41-50).

Similarly, another participant who was the primary carer of two young children stated:

> I don't think I've ever thought about it so much but it really wouldn't be possible for me to do this job without the app. It's the flexibility which makes it possible. I can fit it around my life, the kid's life (Jenny, courier, age 21-30).

Several participants also indicated a preference for flexible work due to the perceived benefits regarding work-life balance and the ability to 'fit work around life'. To this end, three participants had in fact left long term open-ended positions prior to working in the gig economy due to the desire to have greater flexibility in employment and improve their work life balance. An example of this preference for more flexible work is demonstrated in the following quote from a participant who had left an open-ended position within the hospitality sector prior to registering with a hospitality app:

> I was permanent, full time previously. Now it's being able to pick and choose what you want to do. It's not committing to working 6 days a week all the time. It's a good work-life balance so people that I know that already do it, if they are studying, they can do their

> studying and pick and choose the work they want to do around their studies. It's about the work-life balance. That was why I decided to sign up (Jacob, hospitality, age 31-40).

Similarly, in addition to the benefits of flexible scheduling, several participants commented on the benefit of not having to commit to a minimum number of working hours on a consistent or ongoing basis. For example, one participant who was enrolled on a full-time degree course said:

> As a student it feels like quite a commitment to sign up to X number of hours every week if you don't know what your workload is going to be like or if your friend has a party and you don't want to be working. So I think it's really good and it really kind of lends itself to that group of people. It's more flexible (Sarah, hospitality, age 21-30).

However, whilst flexibility was perceived by the majority of participants as a key benefit, workers testimonies revealed that genuine flexibility was, in some cases, limited by such things as consumer demand and the need for some workers to work during peak times such as evenings and weekend in order to generate a certain level of income. Genuine flexibility over working hours was also limited, in some cases, by the requirement to be available for 'shifts'. For example, hospitality workers would be allocated work on a shift-by-shift basis (e.g. from 3pm to 12pm) whilst some courier workers also had to 'reserve' time slots through the app during which they would be expected to log on and be available for work. Therefore, the extent to which individuals benefited from the flexibility of being able to work 'on demand' varied depending on the platform through which they operated and the extent to which the individual could afford to work when they wanted.

6.4 Physical Work Environment and Work-related Risks

Despite often being omitted from subjective measures of job quality (Warr, 2007), the fourth dimension of job quality to be examined relates to the physical work environment and includes consideration of physical work conditions and work-related risks.

The safety of the physical work environment and the work-related risks to which individuals were exposed varied in accordance with the nature of work undertaken and were commonly an intrinsic part of the type of work. For example, for hospitality workers, risks of physical harm were generally associated with the risk of sexual or physical assault as a result of working with members of the public who are drinking

alcohol with one male participant indicating that it was common to be 'groped' when working behind a bar. Conversely, whilst those working through the courier and taxi platforms also faced risks of physical harm as a result of dealing with members of the general public, an example of which was provided by one participant working through the taxi platform who described having to call the police after being attacked by an intoxicated passenger, the most common risk for these workers were those associated with road usage. For example, one participant working through a courier platform had crashed three times in the last year, two of which had been a result of poor road conditions whilst the final incident involved a collision with a car.

For those working through the hospitality platforms, the mitigation of such risks and issues of health and safety were commonly managed by the end user such as the hotel manager or the event organiser, with the majority of clients having already well-established health and safety procedures including, for example, in the provision of security. In contrast, the remote nature of courier and taxi work and the absence of a fixed work location for those operating within these sectors meant these participants had to carry out the responsibility of health and safety management themselves. Indeed, whilst there was some evidence of platforms attempting to mitigate the risks in the remote working environment through, for example, the inclusion of health and safety videos in induction materials or the provision of basic safety equipment, health and safety policies and processes were generally limited. This led to complaints from some participants that platforms did not do enough to encourage safe working practices. An example of this is demonstrated in the following quote:

> You get given a Deliveroo jacket that you have to wear but there were some complaints because they weren't proper bike leathers so everyone got XXL so they could wear their leathers underneath. There was a call to get proper jackets like Papa John's give their riders. The company's response was that you won't be doing more than 30 miles an hour anyway which wasn't great (David, courier, age 21-30).

The failure to monitor and enforce health and safety policies and the reliance upon self-management regarding safe working practices contributed to a perceived increase in the risks for those working through the courier and taxi platforms as well as other road users. For example, a number of participants operating through the taxi platform raised concerns over the long hours worked by some drivers with a potential increased risk of road traffic accidents whilst two participants operating through the courier platforms reported that

they did not wear helmets or high viz jackets despite being advised to do so by the platform, contributing to an enhanced risk of serious harm should an accident occur at work.

However, whilst the absence of adequate safety training for courier and taxi drivers represents a key area of concern, the operation of a cashless system and the associated abatement of the need to carry cash led to perceptions of gig work as safer than traditional taxi and courier work. Indeed, the comparable 'safety' of gig work was commonly reported, particularly by those operating through the taxi platforms, as a primary reason for continuing to work this way as opposed to, for example, a traditional private hire firm (see Chapter 7 for a more detailed discussion of the impact of technology on perceived job quality).

In addition, in spite of the risks associated with transport and delivery services in particular, the physical work environment and the absence of a permanent fixed work location was perceived positively by the majority of participants. For example, a number of respondents referred to the benefits of not having a daily commute whilst one respondent who had previously worked in an office environment reported psychological benefits of not being 'cooped up'. Indeed, the geographical flexibility associated with working through an app and the ability to access work in different locations was also perceived as a key benefit of gig work, particularly for individuals who had plans to travel or who lived in different locations for parts of the year (e.g. students who lived away from home during term time but returned home during the holidays). The following quote provides an example of the perceived benefits associated with this geographical flexibility:

> If you are running short of money you can pick up a shift, even in Manchester or London. Some other companies are very fixed in that you have to work in this specific location but that's the good thing about this type of work, its flexible and if I needed to or wanted to I could work anywhere in the country where there were shifts (Simon, hospitality, age 31-40).

6.5 Job Content

The next job quality dimension to be considered is the job content. As discussed in Chapter 4, Theories of Job Quality, this dimension is generally concerned in accordance with the psychological aspects of a job and is commonly related to such things as the

extent to which work could be described as 'meaningful' or 'challenging' (Mussman, 2009; Amibile, et al., 1994). However, a further key aspect of job content relates to the pace of work and workload (Munoz-Bustillo, et al., 2009). The section begins by exploring the psychological aspects of gig work before going on to consider the pace of work and workplace demands associated with gig work.

6.5.1 Psychological Aspects of Work

Whilst the psychological aspects of work are generally evaluated in accordance with the extent to which work can be described as 'meaningful' (Munoz-Bustillo, et al., 2009) or 'challenging' (Hackman & Oldham, 1976), within the current study the enjoyment of work represented the dominant theme to emerge during interview. Indeed, despite the seemingly repetitive nature of some forms of gig work such as courier work due to the division of labour into a number of tasks (e.g. collect the food, drive to location, drop off food, repeat), the interviews provided more positive accounts with the majority of respondents indicating that they enjoyed the work they undertook in the gig economy. For example, one participant currently studying quantity surveying, in discussing why they worked through one of the courier platforms as opposed to seeking more traditional employment stated:

> Enjoyment. That's literally it. You get to meet new people. Have a chat on the door. Have a chat in the shop. I'm from up North so rain doesn't mean anything to me. Some days customers are a bit less cheery on rainy days and that can be a bit demoralising but because you are working out [whilst working], you get the endorphins pumping so I tend to log off feeling pretty good at the end of the day (Allan, courier, age 21-30).

The enjoyment of cycling in particular, was mentioned by a large proportion of courier workers as an aspect of their job which they not only enjoyed but which had motivated them to undertake this type of work. In addition, the social aspect of gig work in regard to customer service provision, was also reported by participants from across the different platforms as providing a key source of fulfilment and satisfaction at work. An example of this is demonstrated in the following quote:

> I enjoy chatting to different people around the world. It is used by international customers a lot and you meet a diverse group of people. Providing them good customer service can be very satisfying (Jonny, taxi, age 51-60).

Whilst the majority of participants across platforms reported enjoyment of their work, bicycle couriers were most likely to cite health and lifestyle benefits associated with job content with one participant reported having lost two stone in weight since registering with a courier platform.

In addition to the social and physical aspects of gig work, a further job feature connected to participants enjoyment of work within the gig economy, particularly for those operating through the hospitality platforms, were the perceived benefits of task and location variety. An example is demonstrated in the following quote:

> I just love [my job]. I've been places I would never expect. In a muddy field, in the lake district, in the rain, waiting on 350 runners to give them breakfast. It's exciting, it's the not knowing what's coming next. It breaks up the monotony of working in the same place all the time and gives you a chance to learn new things. As I said I had done everything I could at [my old job]. I wanted to do something different (Jacob, hospitality, age 31-40).

Similarly, a second respondent working through the hospitality platform stated:

> Being exposed to some of this versatility and being able to move around would be better for people to get that feeling [of hating work] off their shoulders rather than thinking I'm going to do this job for two years and it's going to be the same every day (Sam, hospitality, age 21-30).

Indeed, task variety was not only associated with increased enjoyment at work but also the development of transferable skills. For example, a number of respondents referred to the development of skills as a consequence of variety at work including such things as greater levels of resilience, adaptability, social and problem-solving skills, the likes of which were perceived as contributing to career progression opportunities (see Section 6.10).

The enjoyment of work, whilst not featured prominently within the job quality literature, had a significant impact on individuals' perception of their job and was commonly cited as a key factor in participant intentions to continue to use the platform in the future even after securing more permanent forms of employment. In some cases, this enjoyment contributed to the perception of gig work as something other than employment. For example, one participant who worked through a hospitality platform in order to supplement their income from their primary business stated:

> It's a lifestyle app. It allows you to support a certain lifestyle, to earn extra money to buy these extra things. I think it needs to be marketed differently. If it can supplement your lifestyle, that's the best way you can use it (Will, hospitality, age 21-30).

Indeed, some participants, in particular those for whom gig work did not represent their primary source of income, described their experience as being like a 'paid hobby' whilst others saw working through a Smartphone app as being more like a 'game'. One participant even described the process of 'winning' jobs via the hospitality app as being addictive. Similarly, another respondent in discussing the rating system used on the app stated:

> I think there should be more opportunity for feedback. You can get thumbs up and thumbs down but you don't get so much personal feedback. They should make it more fun like a game, make it more competitive so you can beat your rivals (Hamish, courier, age 18-20).

This perception of work within the gig economy as something other than employment may be reflective of the restrictive definition of employment which has permeated industrial literature and to which employment policy remains inflexibly anchored.

6.5.2 Pace of Work and Workload

Whilst the majority of participants indicated that they enjoyed their work in the gig economy, several respondents referred to the fast-paced nature of their work and the high levels of physical and mental demands associated with their job. For example, a number of courier workers referred to the need to be 'fast' and the physical demands of cycling for extended periods of time with one participant highlighting the potential for burnout. Similarly, the majority of hospitality workers referred to their work as being more 'intense' than other forms of hospitality work due to their temporary status and their employment predominantly for busy periods such as large events or festivals. For example, one respondent operating through a hospitality platform stated:

> Stamina is the only other issue. Because I'm not as young as I used to be it's a bit challenging. You are on your feet all day and you might not get a chance to sit down. It's probably much better for my health than working in a call centre and just sitting answering calls but it takes some getting used to. So I would say it is quite tiring, it is quite demanding work (Jay, hospitality, age 21-30).

Taxi drivers, whilst engaged in the least physical demanding work by its nature, referred to the mental demands of driving for prolonged periods of time with some participants reporting feeling 'exhausted' at the end of a workday. For example, one respondent said:

> I wouldn't say I'm tired, tired but I'm more mental tired. It's not physically tiring but it is hard work. It's important you take a break and get up and move around during the day (Michael, taxi, age 41-50).

Whilst several participants reported their work as being demanding, some did report benefits related to managing these demands due to the increased control over, for example, when to take rest breaks or how many hours to work in a day. For example, a participant operating in the courier sector stated:

> It's a tough job. It is trying on the body. One of the main advantages to working through the app is that if you get tired you can stop and rest. You don't have to accept a job. You don't always have that choice in this sort of work (Allan, courier, age 21-30).

However, although the increased control over when and for how long to work assisted in reducing the extent to which workers felt their job was demanding, the ability for gig workers to manage workplace demands were undermined in some cases by the concentration of work during peak times, the lack of paid rest breaks and the need for workers to 'keep stats up' which limited the ability to reject tasks. This increases the risk of individuals being exposed to prolonged and intense periods of work, increasing the risk of burnout and the development of longer-term adverse health effects such as musculoskeletal disorders.

6.6 Autonomy

The next dimension of job quality to be examined related to issues of autonomy and control over the labour process.

Autonomy and control could be considered a key characteristic of gig work with the majority of participants in the study operating remotely and without any direct supervision. Indeed, freedom over how and when to work was commonly cited as a key benefit of gig work. To this end, the majority of respondents reported feeling 'more in control' over how, when and where they worked. For example, one participant operating through a courier platform stated:

> I like the fact that it allows you to be independent. You can do everything on the app and if you have any problems then you call. Everything is on the app so you can look at it yourself or try to sort it out yourself (Hamish, courier, age 18-20).

Likewise, a second respondent working through a hospitality platform said:

> I would say one of the main benefits is that you can fully control your own schedule and you know exactly when you are working because you are volunteering in a sense whereas sometimes in bar work you don't really have any control of when you are working or how you are working (Amy, hospitality, age 21-30).

However, whilst the majority of participants felt they had greater levels of control, workers testimonies revealed that the extent to which respondents had genuine autonomy over how to work was often limited by 'soft' control mechanisms including the reliance upon digital performance metrics and the need for workers to maintain a good rating in order to continue to access work through the platform. For example, workers operating through the taxi platforms, whilst able to accept or reject each individual job request, are limited in their ability to negotiate prices, change route or delegate work. In addition, the use of performance tracking software also served to limit the driver's ability to 'choose' work with many drivers referring to the risk of deactivation if they rejected too many requests. This is highlighted in the following quote from a taxi driver:

> You can, not accept a job when it first comes up but if you hit that three times it will say you aren't working today and it will switch you off. You then have to sign back in yourself which isn't convenient when you are on the go. When you refuse it, it also effects your acceptance rate percentage and if you go too low, they will kick you off. So you don't really have any choice to choose the jobs you do (Peter, taxi, age 51-60).

Similar restrictions applied to courier workers who, whilst also able to accept or reject initial job requests, were limited in their ability to work autonomously and in the choice of what jobs to do with a number of respondents referring to the need to 'keep stats up' in order to be able to continue to access work. For example, one participant working through a well-known courier platform described the need to do a certain amount of hours each week in order to be given priority for booking 'shifts' the following week and the difficulties in accessing work for new recruits or where someone has 'fallen out of the loop' due to, for example, sickness or holidays.

Due to the nature of the work, those operating through the taxi platform faced further restrictions from the local authority with private contract hire drivers being prohibited from, for example, accepting jobs which are not pre-booked or, as is the case in Glasgow, operating through more than one platform at a time. An example of the types of restrictions imposed by local authorities are provided in the following quote:

> [The] Council are happy to give us licences to be taxi drivers but then there are all these rules that stop us from being able to behave like a taxi like not being able to sit in a taxi rank or not being able to use bus lanes or deliver food. It's part of the licensing conditions. That's the council again restricting where and how you work (Paul, taxi, age 31-40).

Similarly, those operating through hospitality platforms, whilst facing few limitations from the platform itself, were also subject to third-party control for example from the end user who not only had authority to choose which applicant to employ for the task thus placing limitations upon aspects of worker choice, but also provided instruction as to how the specific task or job should be performed.

However, despite evidence of restrictions on autonomy, participants valued the sense of independence provided from working through an app and generally perceived the replacements of traditional forms of management with digital management positively. A more detailed overview of the impact of technology on individuals experience of working in the gig economy is provided in Chapter 7.

6.7 Employee Participation

Employee participation and the opportunity for individual and collective voice is the next dimension of job quality to be examined.

In exploring issues of employee participation within the gig economy, the majority of participants perceived themselves as having little to no input in overall decision making of the platform through which they operated and had little expectation that this should be any different. This was often connected to the size of the corporations and the perceived sense of anonymity as well as the workers perceived disposability as a result of a growing supply of workers to the platforms. In addition, whilst some participants reported being consulted on their opinion through, for example, employee surveys, there was a common perception that this was little more than a box ticking exercise with a lack of transparency over how these results were used. Whilst the majority of respondents had little

expectation that this should be any different, the failure to listen to workers left some participants feeling undervalued. Further to this, a small number of respondents were hesitant to raise any concerns with the platform due to the fear of deactivation. An example of this is demonstrated in the following quote:

> If you're in an Uber car you don't want to say anything bad about them because you could find yourself deactivated (John, taxi, age 51-60).

In addition to the lack of opportunity for individual participation, the individualised nature of the work and the sense of competition between workers restricted the opportunity for collective participation with difficulties in organising and mobilising workers. For example, one participant operating through a taxi platform in Glasgow stated:

> There have been discussions about mobilising and going on strike before but there aren't enough people who support it. If you have a strike and half the drivers are on the app because everything's surging, then what's the point. There have been strikes in other places, but I've never seen any changes come out of it. When you go to the meetings everyone is just complaining about their own problems. Everyone is so self-interested they just don't get it (Phil, taxi, age 51-60).

Opportunities for collective participation were found to be further constrained by the low levels of union membership amongst participants with only four active union members. Those who did report trade union membership were all over the age of 40 and had a history of trade union membership in prior occupations. For those who were not a member of a trade union, reasons given for not joining included: an indifference to trade union membership due to the temporary nature of their employment within the gig economy; the perception that trade unions were highly politicised and did not represent their interests; a lack of awareness of trade union activities within the sector and of the benefits of trade union membership more generally and; a perception that trade unions would be unable to help due to the self-employed status of the workers and the individualised nature of the work. Indeed, some respondents were not aware of what a trade union was whilst the lack of awareness as to how to engage or sign up to a trade union or what that might entail, was common, particularly amongst participants between the ages of 16-31.

Despite the lack of concern over issues of participation amongst a large proportion of participants, the absence of opportunities for participation at both the individual and collective level fostered a perception of disposability and had a negative impact on the relationship between the worker and the platform. An example of this is demonstrated in the following quote:

> Every time they introduce a change you see people getting nervous, even when it's a good change like with the tipping system or this thing in America where top drivers are getting put through college, people are suspicious it is just going to be another way to swindle you out of more money (George, taxi, age 21-30).

Indeed, the lack of trust and the feeling of disposability, whilst being of low importance to individuals' overall evaluations of their job, influenced the perceived sense of job security with some workers highlighting issues of anxiety as a result of feeling replaceable. In addition, the perceived lack of importance of any one individual to the platform also contributed to a reduction in the sense of obligation and commitment, increasing the likelihood of worker misbehaviour.

6.8 Training

Training opportunities, including formal and informal training and development opportunities, is the next dimension to be explored.

Whilst access to formal training for gig workers varied in accordance with the nature of the work undertaken, the majority of participants reported receiving little to no formal training for their work within the gig economy instead learning 'on the job'. Indeed, although all participants had been required to partake in an 'induction' when registering with their prospective platform, the content of this rarely extended beyond the provision of basic instructions of how to use the application and the completion of registration paperwork. For example, a taxi driver in describing their training experience stated:

> When you go in for training they just go, 'there you go there is your phone, when a job comes up you hit accept or reject and off you go, pick the customer up, drop them off, if you don't know where you are going, use the sat nav" (Michael, taxi, age 41-50).

Similarly, a courier driver described his training experience as follows:

> You have to go to the office to do a training course which is basically just a bunch of safety videos about things like wearing a helmet, taking ID for alcohol, riding a bike properly. It takes about an hour, you watch some videos and tick some boxes to say you understand and that's it (Kevin, courier age 21-30).

Only hospitality workers were required to attend a more formal training session in order to comply with alcohol licensing laws with further access to optional training sessions provided by the platform (for example, in wine waiting or silver service).

Whilst participants generally seemed unconcerned over the absence of formal training opportunities referring to the self-explanatory nature of the work, concerns arise over the future employability of these workers and the transferability of skills learned 'on the job'. In addition, the lack of formal training also had indirect implications for individual quality of work experience due to its impact on health and safety and the capabilities of the workforce. For example, a number of taxi drivers raised concerns over safety due to an over reliance upon GPS by individuals unfamiliar with the local area. Similarly, and despite having access to more formal training opportunities, several hospitality workers referred to the reputational damage associated with inexperienced staff and the consequential implications for the future availability of work. An example of this is demonstrated in the following quote:

> They obviously want to make it as easy as possible to get as many people as possible, but I think it will be of huge benefit for them to have a better quality of staff. There was one event where it was just embarrassing to have this group of girls here because they weren't working and they just give the company a really bad name and then there is just less work for everyone. I think on both sides, employer and worker, there would benefits from having a stricter interview process and more training for new staff (Sarah, hospitality, age 21-30).

6.9 Social working environment

The next dimension of job quality to be explored within this study is the social work environment. This dimension includes issues relating to participants relationships at work with both managers and colleagues, as well as the perceived levels of social support. The following section begins with an overview of individuals subjective experience of social relationships with co-workers before going on to consider the relationship with management (in this case the platform operator).

6.9.1 Relationship with Co-workers

In spite of evidence within recent research that not having a permanent workplace can make it more difficult to form workplace friendships (Woodman, 2013) several respondents referred to the sense of community between workers and, in particular, the presence of an online community through the use of social media apps and online platforms connecting workers. Indeed, the social aspects of gig work were a key feature of respondent's positive experiences of working this way. For example, one participant operating through a hospitality platform stated:

> There is a lot of camaraderie, we are in it together. It is very much a team and even when we are not on shift we talk to each other, we message each other. A couple of the guys I talk to on a regular basis, one of them started just before the royal highland show and she ended up coming with me for the interviews for the European championships, so we've worked together a few times now, we get breakfast and things together which is nice. It is a great way of building friendships and getting to know people and their experiences as well which is something which is becoming harder to do (Jacob, hospitality, age 31-40).

Whilst those operating through hospitality platforms were most likely to engage with other workers, often working in 'teams' for large events, this social engagement was also evident amongst workers from the courier and taxi platforms who commonly reported engaging with other workers at 'hot spots' (such as at airport taxi ranks or city centre locations such as St Andrews Square in Edinburgh) and through social media. For example, one respondent working through a courier platform said:

> There is a bit of a community among the riders, we always give each other a wave when we go by. Also if someone goes somewhere and they can't deliver the food they will usually put a message on the WhatsApp group saying hey guys, does anyone want to come to the [park] for some free food so there is a community in that sense or if someone is out and they get a puncture they might ask if anyone is nearby that has a repair kit. During the really nice weather we have had a get together at the [park] for a beer so there definitely is some sort of community. But I think there are a lot of riders who aren't on the group and probably wouldn't want to be on the group. It's a self-selective audience (Billy, courier, age 21-30).

Indeed, the presence of an 'online community' with platform workers being connected through social media forums and WhatsApp groups was commonly reported. Membership to these forums was frequently reserved only to those working for a specific

platform and were commonly used to share experiences and ask for advice or support from other platform users. As well as providing opportunities to form friendships with other workers and contributing to individual's enjoyment of their jobs, these online networks provided an important source of social support for those undertaking gig work, assisting in mitigating the impact of the lack of support provided by the platform operator. For example, a number of respondents referred to their use of worker forums in order to ask for advice if they had an issue at work or when seeking recommendations for, as an example, mechanics.

6.9.2 Relationship with Management

In addition to the benefits of social interaction with co-workers, reference was made to the reduced opportunity for favouritism in the allocation of work and discrimination in recruitment as a consequence of algorithmic, as opposed to human, control. For example, one participant operating through a courier platform stated:

> In a different context and with zero-hours contracts it is your manager that decides how many hours you do so I think there can be favouritism in a positive and a negative sense. Whereas with Deliveroo, although they have these algorithms, it's not based on whether you are rude or polite one day or whether you're white or black or Muslim, the algorithm doesn't care (Billy, courier, age 21-30).

However, in spite of these perceived benefits, a key source of dissatisfaction amongst participants, in particular those operating through the courier and taxi platforms, was the absence of worker support from the platform operator. Indeed, whilst hospitality workers were generally satisfied with the level of support received from the platform with several respondents citing this as a key benefit of gig work in comparison to more traditional employment agencies, a number of participants operating through the courier and taxi platforms reported feeling 'abandoned' by the platform following the initial registration with little support available for existing employees. Further to this, and in spite of evidence of efforts by platform operators to improve worker support through, for example, the introduction of dedicated worker support lines, the lack of local and expert knowledge and the remote location of these support services fostered the perception that the support available was limited and provided little value to workers. An example of this is provided in the following quote from a taxi driver:

> There is a driver support line but it's as useful as a chocolate fireguard. It's not based in the UK so for example, I found a water bottle in the back of my car and tried to track the customer but couldn't find her. I phoned customer service and they told me to take it down to the pub… at eight in the morning. Because they don't know the local area it can make things complicated (Michael, taxi, age 41-50).

In addition to a perceived lack of support, several participants from across the courier and taxi platforms referred to the prioritisation of the customer over the worker. This included taking the customers side in a dispute, in some cases resulting in the deactivation or suspension of the worker whilst complaints were investigated. This apparent customer bias led some participants feeling disposable and heightened issues of job and income insecurity[13]. An example of the impact of customer bias within a taxi platform is highlighted in the following quote:

> If the customer makes a complaint, [the platform] will take you off the system for days whilst they investigate it. If a driver says you need to put your seatbelts on or refuses 5 passengers in a car and the customer complains, the driver could be off the system for 2 or 3 days. They aren't an app for taxi drivers, they are an app for consumers (Tony, taxi, age 41-50).

The low levels of support across the courier and taxi platforms and the perceived lack of mutuality in the relationship between workers and platforms operators was highlighted by some respondents as a source of employee misbehaviour. For example, a number of participants described how the app could be exploited and made reference to 'bending the rules' by, for example, using the app from home, logging on to more than one platform at a time or accepting cash jobs, despite being prohibited from doing so. The following quote from a courier worker provides an example of the impact of working through a digital app on individuals work-related attitudes:

> There is no reason not to be dishonest with them because I never meet anyone from the company. It's not like you are lying to your boss, you are lying to an app (Kevin, courier worker, age 21-30).

[13] This perception of customer bias was demonstarted by the events of December 2018 when over one hundred couriers were deactivated from the Deliveroo platform following claims of 'fraud' despite workers having not been provided any opportunity to respond to claims of non-delivered food (Horne, 2018).

Similarly, another participant operating through a hospitality platform stated:

> because people are recruited by a third party sometimes what happens is the workers will steal from the companies, they will take money because they think because nobody knows them then they aren't going to get caught (Amy, hospitality worker, age 21-30).

However, despite being recognised as a source of misbehaviour, the perceived lack of obligation and the sense of anonymity provided from working through an app was generally viewed positively by participants due to the absence of guilt associated with, for example, taking a day off work. The impact of technology on the individual's quality of work experience and their relationship with management is considered in greater detail in Chapter 7.

6.10 Opportunities for Advancement

The final job quality dimension to be examined relates to opportunities for career development or advancement. Despite the prominence of opportunities for career progression as a key component of job quality (Munoz-Bustillo, et al., 2009), the majority of participants felt that there were few opportunities for career progression in the gig economy with an absence of vertical promotional opportunities across the different platforms. However, some participants referred to the broader career development opportunities available within the gig economy including opportunities to gain experience and develop skills, networking opportunities and, in some cases, entrepreneurial opportunities. These perceived opportunities for progression varied according to the industrial setting with a perceived absence of such opportunity for individuals working through courier platforms in particular. Indeed, evidence of entrepreneurial activity was generally restricted to the taxi platforms and was largely based upon the purchase and licensing of vehicles to other platform users. Similarly, whilst several respondents referred to the longer-term job opportunities available through for example, allowing individuals to gain experience and get a foot in the door, such opportunities were generally reserved to individuals working through a hospitality platform. Participants experiences of these features will be considered in more detail in the following sections.

6.10.1 Entrepreneurship in the Gig Economy

Despite the absence of promotional opportunities within the gig economy, there was evidence of entrepreneurship amongst participants operating through the taxi platforms. For example, a number of respondents had begun renting out, as well as driving, their

vehicles in order to generate additional income and three respondents had purchased additional vehicles since registering with the platform for the purposes of renting them out to others. The following is an example of one driver's perception of progression within the gig economy based on his own experience:

> If you want to work through the platform but you don't have a car or much money, you come to me, rent a car and then you can save up and get your own car. Then maybe you can do what I did. Save up again and get another car, get someone driving that for you and you can keep going. I think that's progression. I know a guy who has 120 Uber cars in Glasgow. I have 30 cars. I couldn't have that many cars on the road if it wasn't for the platform (Joe, taxi, age 51-60).

Other entrepreneurial activities evident within the gig economy include offering personalised tours of local areas, establishing relationships with local businesses and the sale of services to other drivers (e.g. valet services and insurance services). An example of one participant's experience of growing his pre-existing consultancy business, as well as generating additional income through the provision of personalised tours, is demonstrated in the following quote:

> It acts as a marketing tool for me because if I get people in, I can sell my consultancy skills to them so I quite enjoy that as well. The other thing I've started as well is I've got a brochure and I offer to take people out for a day if they want, if they want a tour I will take them up to Oban or somewhere like that and I make it good and take lunch and I'll take a bottle of prosecco or a bottle of whiskey. So I've been doing that as well and it makes it that bit more interesting. I didn't start with that intent but when I started, I saw the opportunities (Phil, taxi, age 51-60).

Whilst having a significant impact on individual's quality of work experience and their perception of their work within the gig economy, opportunities for entrepreneurship beyond the acquisition of additional vehicles for use on the taxi platforms, were limited and remained dependent upon such things as the individual's personal financial literacy. Such activity arguably contributed to growing levels of inequality in the gig economy with significant differences in the experiences of those renting out vehicles and those who rented these vehicles. For example, whilst the former group often had high costs associated with licensing and maintaining vehicles, the latter group were more vulnerable to issues of wage and job insecurity due to the need to generate a certain minimum level

of income in order to cover rental costs. Those renting vehicles also often experienced lower levels of flexibility due to the need to cover fixed rental costs on an ongoing basis.

6.10.2 Networking Opportunities

In addition to evidence of entrepreneurship, a number of participants, commonly but not exclusively, those operating through the hospitality platforms, discussed the perceived networking opportunities available from working this way. This included with other individuals working for the platforms as well as with customers. For example, one respondent referred to the potential for collaboration with other team members in establishing and expanding his own hospitality-based events business whilst another respondent referred to the growth in his online network and the benefits of securing endorsements through, for example, LinkedIn. In addition, more than one participant reported having been offered a job as a result of their work through the platform. An example of the potential to access longer term job opportunities within the sector is demonstrated in the following quotes:

> When you have worked somewhere a couple of times, if they ever come up with job positions it gives you a foot in the door to say I've been here before with these guys so you do get opportunities (Liam, hospitality, age 31-40).

> I did a couple of jobs and they have since asked me if I wanted a full-time job so you do get opportunities through it (Will, hospitality, age 21-30).

6.10.3 Skill Development

In addition to the career development opportunities available through entrepreneurial activities and the opportunity to network, many respondents felt they had developed skills and experience working in the gig economy which could assist their careers in the future. Whilst this was particularly true for individuals who were new to the labour market, opportunities were also provided for individuals operating within the sector to gain experience in different areas of hospitality. An example of this is demonstrated in the following quote from a reception manager within the hotel industry:

> I'm looking, as part of the next 2-3-year plan, to apply for the position of general manager but at my hotel we don't have a bar or a restaurant, so my sole focus is reception. With [the app] I can do supervisor shifts in a food and drink scenario, I can do waiting, I can do bar work, I can hone the little bits and pieces which will make me a more well-rounded employee so that if I'm going for an interview and they say well you have only done front

> office I can say that is what I have done in my main job but I have experience doing supervisor shifts, managing events with 800 people, I can talk about the things I have done through the app and it adds an extra string to the bow (Craig, hospitality, age 31-40).

In addition, to opportunities to gain experience, a number of respondents referred to the development of transferable skills such as resilience, adaptability and problem solving. An example of this is demonstrated in the following quote from a hospitality worker,

> There were a few days when I was working and I thought do you know what I've learned so much from here or do you know what this will serve me in anything I do (Sarah, hospitality, age 21-30).

Similarly, it was found that although few promotional and direct career development opportunities existed for these workers, the accessible nature of gig work in regards to the ease of registration and the simplified recruitment process, assisted in removing barriers to work for individuals who are disadvantaged by traditional recruitment methods, such as those with little prior work experience or for instances when English is spoken as a second language. An example of the economic opportunities provided by gig work is demonstrated in the following quote:

> I once did a project on homeless people going into work and I think this could really help facilitate something like that and helping people get a foot in the door and get back to work or say you've just left school and you are trying to get your first job. Everyone wants experience but how are you supposed to get experience if no one will give you a job so I think it can really help for stuff like that. Job opportunities rather than opportunities for progression I guess (Amy, hospitality worker, age 21-30).

To this end, the streamlined recruitment process may assist in promoting equal opportunity in accessing employment, a key principle of the 'fair' or 'good' work agendas promoted by the Scottish and UK Government (Taylor, et al., 2017; FWC, 2016). However, in spite of these perceived opportunities for development, there remains uncertainty as to the transferability of skills gained in the gig economy. In addition, further research is needed in order to better understand how the performance metrics used within the gig economy and the absence of traditional job references will impact gig workers future employment opportunities.

6.11 Conclusions

The findings represent the first of two instalments in terms of responding to the objectives set out in Section 1.3, with the broad aims of the current chapter of exploring individuals experiences and perceptions of key job quality dimensions before going on to consider, in the following Chapter, the impact of individual and technological factors on individuals quality of work experience. In more particular terms, the chapter was set up to present an analysis of the findings relating to the first research objective and, in particular, an exploration of individuals' subjective experiences of key dimensions of job quality as highlighted in the conceptual framework outlined in Section 4.7, including: employment status; wages and income; job content; work autonomy; workplace demands; job security; training; working hours; physical working conditions and work-related risks; social working environment; participation and; opportunities for advancement.

Key findings to arise from this chapter concern the complexity of job quality in the gig economy with variations in individual experiences of key aspects of job quality depending on the type of work undertaken. Across the courier platforms in particular, there was a significant deficit in job quality across a number of key dimensions. For example, in regard to wages, whilst wage levels were compliant with legislation for piece work, courier workers were subject to high levels of income insecurity as a result of this piece rate payment system and hidden costs associated with, for example, equipment maintenance and mobile data costs. As a result, a large proportion of these workers, once factoring in additional costs and unpaid time in between 'drops,' were earning less than the hourly minimum wage. In addition, the failure to provide paid rest breaks for these workers and the rate of work increased the physical demands associated with gig work with participants often subject to prolonged periods of, for example, cycling or driving, increasing the risk of injury at work and the development of longer term health effects such as musco-skeletal disorders. Participants operating through both the courier and taxi platforms also reported a lack of effective worker support, an absence of formal training or promotional opportunity and high levels of job insecurity due to their contractual status as independent contractors. For hospitality workers, the conditions of employment were better with individuals being granted access to employment benefits such as holiday pay and rights to a minimum wage due to their contractual status as 'workers' as opposed to independent contractors. In addition, these workers were provided with better levels of worker support from the platform and perceived this support as more accessible than that available through more traditional recruitment agents. Hospitality workers also had

greater access to career development opportunities with formal training available through the platform, as well as being provided opportunities for skill diversification due to the broad range of roles advertised through the platform with some examples including for supervisory positions, waiting and bar roles and events coordinators.

However, despite these improvements, challenges for these workers still existed particularly in the case of fluctuations in the availability of work and risks of unemployment as a consequence of, for example, technological or equipment issues, ill health or deactivation. To this end and despite conducting a study across a range of job types, a number of commonalities existed in the challenges and opportunities faced by workers in the gig economy. For example, participants from across the different platforms reported a number of positive aspects of gig work including high levels of flexibility, enjoyment of the type of work undertaken, and a sense of community amongst workers. However, a number of negative aspects also existed with participants from across the platforms exposed to high levels of wage insecurity and volatility as a result of the absence of contractual security and fluctuations in consumer demand and the availability of work. In addition, opportunities for participation at both the individual and collective level were found to be constrained with a large proportion of workers being denied rights to collective bargaining due to their self-employed status in addition to having limited contact with the platform operator.

In addition to the existence of both positive and negative job attributes, the subjective evaluations also revealed hidden nuances within dimensions and tensions between objective versus subjective evaluations of gig work. For example, whilst objectively, it appeared that few career progression opportunities existed within the gig economy due to a lack of promotional opportunities, the subjective experience of workers revealed that, for some workers, a number of alternative opportunities for career advancement existed including opportunities to gain experience. Similarly, despite a lack of formal job security and thus the objectively insecure nature of gig work, several respondents reported a perceived sense of security due to the open-ended nature of working arrangements. Likewise, in considering the dimension of autonomy and control, whilst evidence is provided of restrictions on autonomy due to the digital control mechanisms employed within the app, participants identified higher levels of autonomy and control as a key benefit of working in the gig economy.

Variations also existed in individuals experience of gig work and the importance placed on key dimensions of job quality in accordance with individual and contextual factors including the availability of suitable alternative employment and the extent to which gig work provided a sole, primary or supplementary source of income. To this end, the second findings and analysis chapter (Chapter 7) explores the extent to which other external factors, including individual differences and technological factors, shape and influence individual's subjective evaluations of their job and the impact of job attributes on the outcomes of job quality. An aim of Chapter 7 is to address objectives 2 and 3 as set out in Section 1.3.

Chapter 7 – Factors Influencing Job Quality

7.0 Introduction

This chapter represents the second instalment of findings. In the previous chapter findings regarding individual's subjective experiences of key components of job quality were described. This Chapter builds upon the preceding chapter and addresses the second and third research objectives identified in Section 1.3 (to explore how individual, contextual and technological factors shape and influence individual's experiences and perceptions of gig work). To achieve the aims of the chapter, the first section provides an account of how individual and contextual factors influence and shape the subjective experience and evaluation of gig work. The idea is that by exploring job quality dimensions within the context of individual fit, a more in-depth and nuanced understanding of quality of work experience for individuals working within the gig economy may be revealed. The second main section of the chapter provides an account of the perceived impact of technology on the quality of work experience. As technology is at the heart of the gig economy (see Chapter 3 – what is gig work), by exploring the impact of technology on individuals experiences of working in the gig economy, an opportunity is provided to explore and contribute to broader debates regarding the changing nature of work and the impacts of technology on the quality of jobs in contemporary society. The chapter ends with a discussion of the main conclusions to take from such an exercise, which also, as with Chapter 6, provide the basis for further discussion and consideration in Chapter 8.

7.1 The Impact of Individual 'Fit'

When asked whether individuals would describe their job within the gig economy as a 'good job' the majority replied that they would. However, a number of participants referred to the subjectivity of 'good' work and reported that, whilst the job was good for them, at that moment in time of for a specific purpose, this would not necessarily be the case for everyone and may not be the case for themselves in the future. Indeed, despite evidence of positive aspects of gig work, a large proportion of respondents felt that a career in the gig economy would not be sustainable over the longer term as a sole source of income due to the absence of certain job characteristics including wage and job stability and the lack of development opportunities. Similarly, whilst the majority of participants indicated that they would recommend working in the gig economy to a friend, this was often met with caveats related to the individual's personal circumstance. The following

section provides an overview of some of the individual factors which were found to influence individual's perception and experiences of gig work.

7.1.1 Worker Characteristics

A key theme to emerge during interview was the perceived suitability of gig work for different types of worker. For example, a large proportion of respondents recognised that gig work would not suit everyone and that satisfaction was largely based upon personal circumstance and the individual needs and preferences of the worker. For example, a number of respondents referred to the fact that their work within the gig economy was 'not for everyone' and there was a need to be 'the right sort of person' for the job. An example is demonstrated in the following quote:

> I feel like the only downside is that you need to be the right person for it. It probably isn't for everyone. If you are the type of person that enjoys variety then Gig is definitely something you would enjoy but if you are someone just looking for any type of work then you might not enjoy it because some people struggle with the challenge of being exposed to different things all the time, they prefer the routine (Jacob, hospitality, age 31-40).

Similarly, another participant working through a courier platform stated:

> You do need to be the right sort of person for the job. It's not going to make you any money if you just want to work when its sunny outside. You should be treating it as being self-employed and you should be working smart and making sure you have a plan B (Allan, courier, age 21-30).

To this end, there were a number of characteristics traits which were perceived as influencing individuals experience of working in the economy. For example, those working through the courier platform commonly referred to the importance of having high levels of fitness and stamina in order to be able to perform the work. Similarly, those working through taxi platforms referred to the need for individuals to have good customer service skills in order to maintain their rating whilst individuals working through the hospitality platform referred to the need for workers to have high levels of stamina and adaptability due to the fast paced nature of the work in comparison to more traditional hospitality based roles.

One of the key characteristic traits perceived to be essential to success in the gig economy was self-motivation. For example, one respondent who had left a full-time job in a fixed location to work through the taxi platform said:

> One thing that I found really hard, especially at the beginning is motivating yourself to go out and drive. The position to have the choice to stay at home or decide to take a day or half day off have been difficult to manage, now I'm getting better (Leo, taxi worker, age 21-30).

Similarly, another working through a hospitality platform stated:

> You have to be self-motivated because you can't have a supervisor hanging over your shoulder the whole time, so you can spot people who aren't cut out for this kind of work pretty quickly. They tend to be the ones who spend a lot of time waiting around to be told what to do (Josh, hospitality worker, age 18-20).

Concurrently, a lack of motivation was also perceived by respondents as a primary reason for a lack of success within the gig economy. An example of this is demonstrated in the following quote from a courier rider:

> Most riders are actually rubbish and don't seem to be able to turn up when they say they will and then whinge about not getting hours for which I have little sympathy to be honest (Paul, courier and taxi worker, age 31-40).

Indeed, the idea that worker discontent within the gig economy was related to issues of job worker mismatch and the individual 'not being the right person for the job', was a commonly cited perception from workers across the different platforms.

7.1.2 Prior Work Experience

In addition to individual personality traits, prior work experiences also had an influence on individual's perceptions of their working conditions and experiences of certain job quality dimensions. To this end, workers classified as long-term self-employed were least vulnerable to the risks associated with gig work often having developed coping strategies and mechanisms to counter some of the issues associated with this type of work. Examples included portfolio diversification in order to address issues of precarity and maximise entrepreneurial opportunities, union membership in order to increase levels of voice and individual support, the use of private insurance schemes in order to counter a

lack of benefits including sick pay, and the exploitation of new and old tax breaks in order to maximise perceived wage related benefits associated with gig work. For example, a number of long term self-employed undertook gig work in conjunction with other forms of self-employment with one respondent working through multiple platforms in order to address issues of fluctuation in demand and enhance wage and job stability. Similarly, one participant referred to their plan to invest in property in order to address the lack of pension benefits available to them as self-employed and as a means of providing an alternative source of funding in later life. The following also provides an example of the ways in which tax related benefits could be maximised/exploited which was found to be something which those who had been working as self-employed over the longer term were more likely to be familiar with:

> Bizarrely you get 20p a mile for every mile you cycle as your tax allowance from HMRC but what I put in, is a different matter. So, you slam in loads of miles that knocks your tax down, some of my mortgage goes on it because I work from home. If you are self-employed, you hire an accountant. It's not like working for a company where you just take what they give you. My mate I worked at Uber with, he managed to, through various different business dealings took 35k in profit, hired an accountant and paid £35 tax. If you paid a normal PAYE job you would have to earn about 56k to get that (Paul, taxi and courier worker, age 31-40).

Those who were previously employed to undertake alternative forms of casual work or who were entering the labour market for the first time were also more likely to have a positive perception of gig work. For example, one participant who had only recently left full time education stated:

> all my friends, even though they get paid more than me because they are doing more hours, I get paid more per hour and it makes them really jealous. My friend works for [a large bank] and she gets £5.90 an hour and I get £8 an hour and obviously she works for a big company so yeh I do think the wages are really good (Sarah, hospitality, age 21-30).

However, the perception that gig work represented an improvement on previous jobs was not exclusive to those who had been predominantly employed to undertake casual work with two participants having left full time, open-ended occupations in order to work in the gig economy due to the perceived benefits. For example, one participant had left a full time, open-ended job as a graphic designer in order to work full time as a courier worker in the gig economy due to the perceived benefits of flexible scheduling and work-

life balance. Similarly, the following represents a quote from an individual who left a full-time permanent occupation within hospitality in order to work full time for a taxi platform:

> When I started [to] drive with Uber I was employed by a University as a general assistant in Hospitality Services. I kept both jobs for three months to understand how the platform works and to see if it was worth quitting my permanent job to drive full time. After these three months I realised that my hourly rate was higher with Uber and I decided to drive full time (Leo, taxi, age 21-30).

Participants who had prior work experience within the same occupational sector (e.g. those who had worker in either the courier, taxi, or hospitality sector previously and who continued to undertake this type of work through the app) were also more likely to report positive experiences of the specific occupational benefits of platform technology used within the gig economy including issues of efficiency, control and safety. The perceived impact of the technology will be considered in greater detail in the second part of this chapter.

7.1.3 Dependence Upon Income

In addition to characteristic traits and individual preference, a further factor which was found to influence individuals experience of working in the gig economy was the level of dependence upon income generated from gig work. Over half of participants were working in the gig economy on an ad hoc basis as a means of supplementing income from for example, student bursaries, employment, pension or unemployment benefits, or in order to provide income for a temporary period (e.g. whilst pursuing longer term career options or during the summer break). For some respondents, their work within the gig economy provided additional income for things such as holidays, socialising or to be put towards savings. An example of this is demonstrated in the following quote from an individual who undertook gig work in conjunction with a full time, open-ended position as a hotel reception manager:

> I'm not relying on it so it's more the extras, saving on the run up to Christmas and things like that. I've set up a separate account for this to go into. Its little bits dripping in which I'm not aware of so to speak…than there is a little pot there if I want to go on holiday (Craig, hospitality, age 31-40).

In addition, for some participants gig work offered a 'safety net', providing the opportunity to top up income during times of financial hardship. For example, one participant reported working in the gig economy in order to address issues of seasonality associated with their self-owned business:

> There is no business for me all summer cos everyone buys [my products] over winter so this gives me something to keep myself ticking over without having to sell up to one of the bigger players (Will, hospitality, age 21-30).

Indeed, those who were not dependent upon income generated from gig work were less vulnerable to issues of wage and job instability discussed in Chapter 6 reducing the importance of this dimension in their overall evaluation of gig work. Similarly, the extent to which individuals were dependent upon the income generated from gig work also influenced the individual's experiences of flexibility as well as the impact of concerns related to the ongoing availability of work. To this end, those who were relying upon gig work as a primary or sole source of income commonly faced greater restrictions on levels of flexibility due to the concentration of work during peak times and the need to work during these times in order to generate sufficient income (e.g. for couriers peak times would often be around meal times whilst for taxi workers peak times included early week-day mornings, weekends and evenings and for hospitality workers hours were commonly concentrated around evening and weekend work). An example of the concentration of work around peak times and the impact on take home pay is demonstrated in the following quote:

> The main problem and the reason for me that it is not constantly the most reliable thing is that a weekend, say a Friday or a Saturday you could make £100 in a day which is really good. But equally you could go out on a Monday night or a Wednesday night, it sorts of drops mid-week, and you could be cycling round for two hours and actually not get anything coming through (Kevin, courier worker, age 21-30).

Similarly, the impact of a lack of job stability on the ongoing availability of work had a more significant impact for those who relied upon their income from gig work as a means of covering living expenses such as bills or rent with some respondents referring to the anxiety associated with the lack of wage and job stability. An example of this is demonstrated in the following quote:

> When I worked with agencies, I often worked on short term contracts [but] I was working on three month to six month contracts so when I knew that was coming to an end I could put the feelers out and start looking for something else but with gig work, there is that lack of stability and we all have bills to pay and you need to know what income you will be bringing in. I get very anxious about where the next wage is going to come from (Liam, hospitality worker, age 31-40).

Overall, the perceived importance of the dimension of wages to individual's evaluations of good work and the impact upon their quality of work experience was influenced by the extent to which their income from gig work represented a necessary source of income. Those who were relying upon their income from gig work in order to cover living expenses were more vulnerable to the issues associated with gig work and were, in some cases, less able to enjoy the benefits resulting in a poorer quality of work experience.

7.1.4 Individual Choice and Labour Market Context

In addition to variations between those who relied upon their income from the gig economy as a sole source of income and those who used gig work in order to supplement or top up their income, another key factor influencing individuals perceptions and experiences of gig work was the extent to which working this way was a choice/preference or was due to a lack of suitable alternatives.

Indeed, whilst the majority of participants indicated that working in the gig economy was a voluntary choice, a number of respondents had found themselves working in the gig economy out of necessity due to, for example, redundancy, difficulties in finding employment or due to the need to supplement income in order to cover living expenses. Some participants had unsuccessfully applied for multiple jobs prior to signing up to the platform and continued to seek alternative employment whilst using gig work to sustain their job search. Examples of occasions where working in the gig economy could be perceived as necessity rather than choice are demonstrated in the following quotes taken from a full-time student seeking flexible employment and an individual who found themselves unemployed following redundancy:

> I moved to Glasgow at the end of May and I was trying to find a job in Glasgow and I had years of experience in bar work and I handed out maybe 260 CV's and that's not even counting online applications also. I just wanted bar work as I knew I was doing my master's

> this year so I couldn't really commit to a full-time job. So basically, I was just applying and applying and applying everywhere and then I came across Gig and I sent them a little email and heard back literally a few hours later. There was an event that weekend so they asked me if I wanted to work it and I was like yes please cos I really needed to get some money coming in (Alex, hospitality, age 21-30).

> I went to University [for 2 weeks] decided it wasn't for me and then I left that and went to bartending. Got laid off that job during the summer and from there I was scavenging around thinking I've got rent to pay what am I gonna do. So I had a bike and I knew there was this new company called Deliveroo in Edinburgh, so I applied for a job there and within a week I was hired (David, courier, age 21-30).

Participants working in the gig economy as a last resort were more likely to report dissatisfaction with certain aspects of gig work due to a lack of congruence between their individual needs/preferences and the characteristics of gig work. For example, those seeking full time employment but who were undertaking gig work due to the difficulties in securing a full-time position were more likely to report dissatisfaction related to working hours and fluctuations in the availability of work in the gig economy. In addition, those working in the gig economy out of necessity were most likely to be actively seeking alternative forms of employment.

7.1.5 Temporal Aspects of Job Quality

A further factor influencing individual's perceptions and experiences of gig work was the expectation that such work would be temporary. Indeed, the majority of participants indicted that they did not see a long-term career within the gig economy and had career aspirations unrelated to their work within the gig economy. This was particularly common amongst students working in the gig economy to support their studies and who hoped to secure a future career within their relevant disciplines. In addition, a number of participants indicated that they had already or were in the process of applying for permanent positions with gig work representing a 'means to an end' in their pursuit of more stable employment. An example of this is demonstrated in the following quote:

> Gig have been amazing in getting me work whilst I wait to start my new job and I'll definitely carry on using the app when I have time but longer term I definitely need something bit more permanent and more consistent (Chris, hospitality, age 21-30).

Indeed, despite the focus upon more positive aspects of gig work in individual's evaluation of their jobs including, for example, in regards to the high levels of flexibility experienced, the perception of gig work as unsustainable was common and was frequently related to issues of job and wage instability and a lack of opportunities for career progression. An example of the variation in the perception of gig work as 'good' versus being sustainable as a long-term career, is demonstrated in the following quotes:

> With this type of work, it isn't really a career. Everybody is looking for a career, this type of job, it isn't really a career. It is great for the mean time but I'm really looking for something permanent that I can build on. Something that you invest in and can build up (Jay, hospitality, age 21-30).

> [It] Probably is not the job of my life but it is definitely a good job. It's true that I don't have much safety (payslip, sickness, holidays) as my previous contract but everything is in your hands and this makes me feel more responsible and free at the same time (Leo, taxi, age 21-30).

To a similar end, when asked if participants would recommend gig work to their friends the majority said they would however, this was often met with caveats such as the recommendation only on a short term or temporary basis or the need to 'warn' them of about issues of income volatility. Examples of the limitations attached to individuals' recommendations are demonstrated in the following quotes:

> I would recommend it but I would tell people that it's one of those things, you get paid in a week, quick fix but it's not going to fix your money problems or guarantee you a certain amount of work each week. For most people I don't think this would be a long-term thing, but it works for what I need (Amy, hospitality, age 21-30).

> If I were advising anyone about working for [a taxi platform] I would say yes, it's good, here are the reasons I do it but be wary, go and get yourself another job. It's no way to make a living (Phil, taxi, age 51-60).

A further issue relating to the sustainability of work-life in the gig economy was the sustainment and expected erosion in employment conditions as a consequence of growing levels of competition. Indeed, a number of participants, particularly across the taxi platform, already felt their take home pay had been reduced over time as a consequence of the growth in the number of drivers registered to the platform. This was expected to

get worse as the number of companies operating within the sector, and thus the number of drivers, continued to increase. An example of the perceived decline in employment conditions is demonstrated in the following quote:

> The model is great but it's getting too competitive. The more drivers, the worse it's going to get. When I first started I could do 25 hours and make really good money but I'm increasingly doing more and more hours to get the same amount of money. These apps may have changed the taxi industry, but not for the better in relation to the long-term wages of the drivers (Jonny, taxi, age 51-60).

However, there were some exceptions with some participants indicating their intention to continue to work in the gig economy as their primary or sole occupation over the longer term. In some cases, this was in order to supplement income from, for example, pension benefits. An example of this is demonstrated in the following quote:

> I plan to retire next year so I can spend more time with the family. I'm going to live in Turkey, I bought a house there 11 years ago and I've been back and forward now. When I do retire, I'm going to come back to Scotland and I'm going to do Uber then. Every time I come back ill have a car, a new car. So July I'll buy a car and apply for a license for the car. By time I come back it will all be licensed up. Ill drive that car for 2 months and probably make about £7000 and then I'll take that back to Turkey with me and that's more than enough to live in Turkey for a year so that's my plans. This is for the first few years (Joe, taxi, age 51-60).

In addition, in spite of issues related to the sustainability of a long-term career in the gig economy, a number of participants referred to the economic opportunities associated with gig work and benefits of being able to access work at short notice and on an on-demand basis (e.g. during times of financial hardship). In addition, a continuation of gig working was often seen as an enabler or facilitator in the pursuit of future ambitions. For example, and as discussed above, the flexibility of gig work and the absence of obligation was seen as providing an opportunity to generate income whilst allowing time for the pursuit of other activities supportive of the realisation of future ambitions (for example, returning to education). Examples of the perceived role of gig work in pursuit of future ambitions are demonstrated in the following quotes:

> I definitely want to get into publishing. I'm doing an internship this year on top of my studies. For the first 2 weeks it's just a feeling out so we won't be paid but after the two-

> week period if they want me to continue working there then they will discuss salary. I'll keep using the app to top up income but that will be my priority (Alex, hospitality, age 21-30).

> I will definitely keep using [the app]. Unless I get something related to journalism which I am looking in to but a lot of it is unpaid work, so I would probably still do this anyway (Kirsty, courier, age 18-20).

Therefore, whilst gig work was commonly perceived as being unsustainable as an alternative to more permanent, stable employment over the long term, as a temporary or supplementary source of income gig work was generally viewed more positively.

7.2 The Impact of Technology on the Quality of Work Experience

In addition to issues of job worker match, this study also explored the use and perceived impact of technology on individual's experience of gig work. To this end and in spite of variations in individuals subjective experience of job quality in the gig economy, the introduction of new platform technology and the use of a Smartphone for work was generally perceived by all participants as having a positive impact on their working lives. In some cases, technology was even described as the key benefit of working in the gig economy. This was particularly true for individuals who had previously undertaken the same type of work outwith the gig economy (e.g. those who had previously undertaken courier, taxi or hospitality work prior to the development of platform technology). An example of this is demonstrated in the following quote from a taxi driver who had previously operated as a private contract hire driver under a traditional model which relied upon phone-based systems to allocate work to drivers:

> In a lot of ways the work is not any different, but the technology makes it a lot easier, being able to see everything on your phone and everything being tracked, it's just safer and gives you the chance to take control a bit more. It is definitely the main benefit (John, taxi, age 51-60).

Similarly, another respondent, self-employed long term within the courier industry, described the benefits of new technology*:*

> I enjoy it more because it's easier to use. It's a much better platform than when I started as a courier. When I started as a courier there was internet, but it was just beginning. I was taking solicitors letters to architects etc, so I was running about the city all day long and

> the majority of the work was from my boss sending me a text when the next job came in. That's how we got the work. And there were problems. You could be in the wrong location; you could be sat in one place for eight hours and only get one job in town. The system wasn't efficient. It was more variable and the work was a lot less consistent (Michael, courier, age 41-50).

Indeed, a number of respondents referred to the efficiency and sense of independence provided by working remotely through an application on a Smartphone. To this end, a number of participants commented on how easy the application was to use and the benefits of having 'everything in one place'. For example, respondents who had previously undertaken agency-based work commonly referred to the advantages of being able to record timesheets electronically through the app as opposed to relying upon a paper-based system. Similarly, one participant operating through a taxi platform said:

> For me what the gig economy is about is how are we using this technology to make people's lives better. It's using Smartphone technology properly at last instead of just using it for taking pictures and social media. Now it actually serves a purpose. I can now do everything on this. I can work, I can do my accounts, I can do my shopping, my calendars on it, it connects to my computer. It has made my working life so much easier (Gavin, taxi, age 51-60).

Technological aspects of gig work and the perceived benefits associated with working this way were also identified by some participants as a motivating factor for working in the gig economy. To this end, some respondents indicated that they had not previously thought of undertaking taxi or courier worker before registering with a platform and had not considered undertaking the same type of work outwith the gig economy. For these workers, the 'how' of being able to access economic opportunities through their phone on a flexible, on demand basis was more important than the 'what' (e.g. the specific nature of the task) in their decision to undertake work in the gig economy.

The following section provides a more detailed overview of some of the perceived benefits and downsides of platform technology as well as the impact of algorithmic management on individuals experiences and perceptions of gig work and the perceived impact of platform technology on the future of work.

7.2.1 Benefits of Platform Technology

One of the main benefits of the platform technology identified by participants was the increased level of visibility and transparency in the allocation and distribution of work in comparison to more traditional ways of working, providing individuals with a greater sense of autonomy and control over their working life. For example, one respondent working through a taxi platform described the reduction in wasted journey time due to the ability to see jobs in real time, whilst several respondents operating through hospitality platforms referred to the benefits of being able to see work available through the application rather than relying upon a recruitment agent to communicate this information. An example of the benefits associated with the perceived increased levels of visibility over work available is demonstrated in the following quote from a participant employed by a number of agencies throughout their working life:

> I've worked for a lot of agencies, thinking about that now, there is quite a contrast between that and this. Now the gig seeker, it gives them greater visibility of what's there instead of waiting for a phone call hoping you have done enough or that you have the rights skills and experiences. With this there is a lot more autonomy about it. If I see a job and I think I have the right skills for it I can apply for it, midday or midnight, and you get accepted or rejected. I think this is a better way of doing it. It gives the job seeker a lot more visibility and a lot more choice as well (Chris, hospitality, age 21-30).

In addition to enhancing individuals perceived sense of control over their work schedule, the greater levels of visibility of work available and the increased control over when and for how long to work as a result of the ability to log in and out of the app and select which jobs to apply for/accept, also contributed to perceived improvements in work-life balance. Indeed, a number of respondents referred to the benefits of being able to 'fit work around life' with improved levels of work-life balance commonly cited as a key reason for working in the gig economy. An example of how technology was perceived as influencing work-life balance is demonstrated in the following quote:

> Sometimes in bars they only give you a week's notice for the rota so you can't really plan ahead to do anything else around your work so your work-life balance gets skewed a little. With [the app] you have more control over your work-life balance so you can plan ahead and do things. In jobs I have done before I've had to cancel plans I've made weeks in advance because a shift just happened to land on the day and you aren't in a position to say,

> sorry I've got plans, especially if you are a new member of staff because you don't want them to think you are a flake (Alex, hospitality, age 21-30).

Further to the impact upon individuals perceived levels of control and the associated benefits regarding work-life balance, the enhanced levels of visibility over the labour process were also recognised by some respondents as improving levels of safety at work. For example, the need for end users to register an account in order to use the app and the ability to locate and track the worker through the use of GPS technology contributed to greater feelings of safety amongst workers. In addition, although the absence of cash payments in the gig economy was identified by some respondents as having a negative impact on tipping culture as highlighted in Section 6.1 – wages and benefits, a number of respondents from the courier and taxi-based platforms in particular referred to the safety benefits associated with the abatement of the requirement to carry cash.

Furthermore, the requirement for consumers to register an account with the platform and provide payment details upfront also served to reduce the risk of 'no shows' with customers charged and workers paid for cancelled jobs. In relation to taxi work in particular, the requirement for customers to hold an account and the ability for drivers to rate and see the ratings of customers was seen as having a direct influence on the 'quality' of customer, reducing the perceived risks for the driver. For example, one driver stated:

> All customers have to be registered, it's not like some drunk person can just phone up a number from a pay as you go and order a car. It's the main benefit. You don't realise how different the customer base is to a normal private hire company. A lot of no shows and you get more neds and druggies with other private hire companies. No one's going to do anything if they know you have their credit card details. With other private hire companies, say someone is sick in your car or just runs away without paying, you've no chance of recovering that money (Tony, taxi, age 41-50).

It is important to note that whilst enhanced levels of visibility were generally perceived positively, some participants did refer to the potential risks associated with this, particularly for customers. One participant described the recent introduction of a new call back system for couriers which blocked individuals from accessing customers personal phone numbers due to an increase in reported incidences of inappropriate contact and concerns over stalking. The occurrence of such incidents and the impact of platform technology on the consumer service experience, whilst outwith the scope of this thesis,

represents an issue in need of further investigation in order to better understand societal impacts of the growth in the gig economy.

7.2.2 Downsides to Platform Technology

Despite the generally positive perception of the impact of technology on individuals' experiences of work, some respondents referred to the limitations or weaknesses of the technology, particularly regarding problem solving. For example, a number of participants operating through the taxi and courier platforms referred to the inefficiencies of GPS technology due to its lack of local knowledge and inflexibility with app's often unable to calculate the fastest route or account for temporary or recent changes in the road system. For example, one participant utilising a taxi app stated:

> The app itself isn't always the most efficient though. Everything is worked out purely by satellites, so it doesn't know which direction you're going on or what side of the road I'm on. Sometimes you end up going five miles round to take someone along the road to Tesco (Peter, taxi, age 51-60).

Other technological issues highlighted by participants included such things as the app freezing leaving individuals 'locked out' of work and technological glitches (both internal to the application and external through, for example, the loss of data in a geographical area) which impact the functionality of the app and the ability to access work in addition to issues of battery usage which, in some cases, served as a limitation on working hours.

A further aspect of technology identified by participants as impacting their experience of work within the gig economy was the customer rating system. Indeed, a number of respondents reported feeling a sense of satisfaction as a result of the customer rating systems operated by the platforms. For example, one respondent said:

> [The customer rating system] is good because it gives you a boost if you get a nice comment or a good review. Feels like you've done a good job. I think it helps you improve as a person as well cos you're getting that feedback (Hamish, courier, age 18-20).

However, despite the positive perception of the rating system from a minority of respondents, a large proportion of participants, in particular those operating through taxi platforms, indicated a sense of anxiety as a result of the subjective nature of the rating system and the potential for deactivation as a result of a low rating. An example of this is demonstrated in the following quote:

> The customer rating system is just another stick to beat you with. You get a drunk customer at 2am and they can give you a 1 star because they maybe think it's funny but then that can affect your rating really badly. If you get too many you can get kicked off the platform, I think the base is 4.6 or something like that. They don't tell you what the rating means. 4 stars seems like a good score so [the customers] don't realise that it's a demerit and could result in drivers being deactivated and losing their job (Peter, taxi, age 51-60).

The potential for arbitrary deactivation and the influence of the subjective customer rating system on individual's ability to access work through the platform further compounded issues of job and wage insecurity for workers across the different platforms.

7.2.3 The Impact of Algorithmic Management

As highlighted in section 6.9.2, technology and the replacement of human management with algorithmic management was also found to influence individuals job quality experiences and work-related attitudes including dimensions of job quality such as autonomy and perceived levels of worker support as well as in regard to individual attitudes towards the platform operator. To this end, the sense of anonymity provided from working through an 'app' and the absence of traditional forms of supervision were perceived by participants as having both a beneficial and detrimental effect on their work experience. Indeed, whilst some participants indicated that they preferred the feeling of independence which was provided when working remotely through an app on a Smartphone, others reported feeling unsupported and undervalued as a result of the lack of human interaction with the platform operator. The following quote provides an example of the perceived benefits associated with algorithmic as opposed to human management:

> I actually do get quite ill regularly. I recently found out I have a serotonin deficiency which means I can get quite lethargic. It can sometimes affect your mental state as well. If I think I'm going to have a bit of a dip in mental health I can just cancel without having to even talk to anyone which is really good. It is a job at the end of the day so I would always try and give them as much notice as possible but it's good not to have that guilt or feel that pressure that you have to go if you aren't feeling well (Simon, hospitality, age 31-40).

Reference was also made by some participants to the perceived reduction in opportunities for favouritism and discrimination as a result of algorithmic as opposed to human control. Indeed, a number of participants, primarily but not exclusively those working through the

courier and taxi platforms, referred to the increased 'fairness' associated with the allocation of work to the individual on the basis of, for example, proximity rather than on the basis of who was favoured by management. Reference was also made to the reduced levels of ambiguity related to role expectations as a result of the use of algorithmic forms of control and a reliance upon objective performance metrics (e.g. the individuals job rejection rate) rather than the subjective evaluation of management[14].

However, whilst some respondents preferred not having a 'traditional' manager, others reported a sense of abandonment following registration with a number of participants referring to feeling like they were 'just a number'. This not only contributed to increased levels of dissatisfaction, including with perceived levels of worker support, but also led to a reduced sense of commitment towards the platform operator, an example of which is demonstrated in the following quote:

> If you muck up, you can't really get fired. Like say you mucked up at one big event, if you worked for a company, they can fire you, whereas if I was to muck it up, they can't fire me. They could speak to me about it, but they couldn't fire me. So you don't have that sense of you have to do stuff. If you feel like you can't do something, you can just say you can't do something and they can't make you do it. You don't feel guilty like you are letting someone down (Josh, hospitality, age 18-20).

This reduced sense of commitment was highlighted by some as a key source of employee misbehaviour. Indeed, a number of participants made reference to opportunities for workers to 'bend the rules' through, for example, using the app from home, working through more than one platform at a time or accepting cash jobs, all behaviours which were directly prohibited by the platform operator. An example of the impact of technology on individual attitudes towards misbehaviour is demonstrated in the following quote:

> To be honest, if they introduced sick pay, I would just make sure I took my annual allowance of sick pay. There is no reason not to be dishonest with them because I never meet anyone from the company. It's not like you are lying to your boss, you are lying to an app (Paul, taxi and courier, age 31-40).

[14] Issues related to the subjective customer rating system are considered in more detail in Section 7.5.

However, as is highlighted in Chapter 6, the levels of support and human contact varied between platforms with those working through the hospitality platform reporting higher levels of worker support and interaction with management. These higher levels of perceived support commonly resulted in more positive evaluations of the platform and, in some cases, were referred to as a key benefit of working through the platform as opposed to working for a more traditional agency. An example of this is demonstrated in the following quote:

> A lot of agencies just see people as numbers but with [the platform] there is a bit more of a personal connection if that makes sense. Which is weird because it's through an app rather than in person. It is definitely one of the positive aspects and the reason I would recommend them. I think [they] have a good relationship with their seekers and they make you feel valued. One of the [managers] even provided a reference for me. It shows the characteristics of the people at the company. I don't think I would have got that through other agencies. (Chris, hospitality, age 21-30).

These divergent experiences, in addition to highlighting the impact of technology on the employee-employer relationship, also highlight the continued importance of face to face interaction for employee relations.

7.2.4 Gig Work as the Future of Work

In spite of the challenges associated with working in the gig economy and the general perception of a long-term career in the gig economy as unsustainable, the majority of participants saw this way of working and the use of platform technology for work as the 'future' with the expectation that working this way will increasingly become the norm for a growing proportion of the population. The expected spread of platform technology within the hospitality, courier and taxi sectors, as well as across other industrial settings, was generally viewed positively by participants. An example of this is demonstrated in the following quote from a hospitality worker:

> I think it is something which will develop in the future. When you look at how people work now and the 24/7 society we live in I think being able to have this idea, being able to communicate [with the platform] at whatever time is a good time for you rather than whatever time is good for the employer, is a very good thing (Craig, hospitality worker, age 31-40).

Similarly, another respondent who was a full-time student undertaking courier work stated:

> I think it's the way forward. I think people view careers more now as multiple jobs and multiple careers and people want more varied careers and we want to travel and stuff so I think anything that brings more flexibility to our lives is a good thing (Kevin, courier, age 21-30).

Some respondents even referred to the 'death' of more traditional ways of working as a consequence of the growth in platform-based work and increased efficiency in the labour process. For example, one taxi driver whom had been working in the taxi industry for thirty-five years referred to the expected replacement of black cabs and traditional cab ranks as a result of the growth in taxi based apps and the benefits of being able to book a taxi at the click of a button rather than queuing or flagging one down in the street. Similarly, a participant working through the courier platform referred to courier work outside the gig economy as a slowly dying trade due to the increased efficiency associated with having a centralised platform.

However, although the majority of respondents expected gig work to become increasingly common in the future, the perceived appropriateness of platform technology for certain types of work was not without its limitations with some respondents referring to the difficulties in applying platform technology in certain sectors such as retail. In addition, a small number of respondents working through the courier and taxi platforms feared that the introduction of platform technology within the sector was merely the next step towards automation and the replacement of their jobs with driverless cars and drone deliveries. For example, one participant operating through a taxi platform stated:

> Uber is definitely a long-time thing, see what they are trying to do is build as big a customer base as possible. The next wave after this will be driverless cars. People say you can never have them [in the City] but if you look at the statistics, there are more accidents by drivers than there are by driverless cars so you're going to be safer with a computer. You aren't going to hold back technology. Once they have done with workers, they will just fling them to the side and use their new technology to do the work (Phil, taxi, age 51-60).

7.3 Conclusions

The purpose of this chapter was to build upon Chapter 6 and present an analysis of the findings relating to the second and third research objectives, exploring how individual,

contextual and technological factors shape and influence gig workers quality of work experience. In contrast to the negative perception of gig work commonly portrayed within the media, the majority of participants reported positive experiences of gig work. However, this was commonly associated with the extent to which the conditions of gig work 'matched' the needs, preferences and characteristics of the worker. For example, issues of necessity and the absence of labour market alternatives undermined the quality of work for some gig workers, creating a situation where individuals are obliged to accept work that did not necessarily meet their needs. Further to this and in spite of respondents' positive perceptions and experiences of gig work, nearly all perceived a career within the gig economy as unsustainable, either as a primary source of income or over the longer term. In addition, a large proportion of respondents referred to the importance of job-worker fit and the lack of suitability of this type of work for individuals who may be vulnerable to exploitation as a consequence of their financial dependence upon their income from the gig economy as a means of escaping poverty. However, whilst the majority of participants perceived a career within the gig economy as unsustainable and reported future ambitions unrelated to their current work within the gig economy, a number of respondents indicated their intention to continue to use the platform either as a supplementary form of income or as a means of generating income whilst in pursuit of broader career and life aspirations.

The findings also revealed that platform technology had a significant impact on individual's quality of work experience and the dimensions and outcomes of job quality. Indeed, the platform technology used within the gig economy was generally perceived positively by participants and was commonly cited as a key benefit of working this way. The increased visibility and transparency provided from working through an app enhanced individual's ability to control their own work schedule, increasing the levels of flexibility and autonomy experienced in addition to providing benefits related to work-life balance. Similarly, the algorithmic as opposed to human control and the absence of direct supervision also contributed to an increased sense of autonomy at work. However, a number of downsides of working through an app were also identified. For example, in spite of the benefits associated with digital management including, for example, in the reduced opportunities for discrimination in the allocation of work, the limited contact with the platform operator left some participants feeling unsupported which had a negative impact on relations with the platform operator in addition to representing a source of job dissatisfaction. Similarly, issues related to the reliability and functionality

of the app and the reliance upon a subjective customer rating system further contributed to issues of job and wage insecurity with several participants having experienced times when they had difficulties accessing work due to technological issues or as a result of a customer complaint.

Finally, the perceived gigification of work as a result of the growth in platform technology highlights the importance of the study's findings to the broader world of work as gig employment practices become increasingly pervasive within new industrial settings, presenting a new set of challenges and opportunities for workers, employers and regulators. Key challenges and theoretical and practical implications of the findings for how job quality is conceptualised, measured and regulated, will be considered in greater detail in the discussions and conclusions chapters. In this penultimate chapter (Chapter 8), the broad aim is to more widely discuss both sets of findings, so as to further establish their significance and relevance in relation to the research objectives as set out in Section 1.3.

Chapter 8 – Discussion

8.0 Introduction

Having presented an analysis of experiences of gig work in the previous two chapters (Chapters 6 and 7), the broad aim of the current chapter is to further engage with the objectives outlined in Section 1.3, via a discussion involving evidence, theories and debates in the wider job quality literature. To achieve such an objective, the chapter is structured around three main sections, each relating to one of the research objectives. The first section considers the findings related to individual's subjective experiences of key job quality components (objective 1), building upon current evidence related to job quality and gig work and revealing the complexities of evaluating the quality of gig jobs. The next section discusses the extent to which job-worker fit shapes individual's subjective quality of work experience (objective 2) providing a more holistic understanding of job quality in the gig economy. Following on from this, the findings related to the use and perceived impact of technology on individual's quality of work experience in the gig economy are discussed (objective 3), situating the appraisal of job quality within broader debates related to the impact of changes in the nature of work. Finally, the chapter concludes with a brief summary of the key issues to arise from the wider discussion and paves the way for a final chapter (Chapter 9) that set out in the main to assess the extent to which the research objectives set out in Section 1.3 have been met.

8.1 Job Quality in the Gig Economy: Key Components of Job Quality

With a recent resurgence in interest of job quality and within the context of current debate related to the quality of gig work (Kalleberg & Dunn, 2017), this study aims to make a contribution to such debates, providing an analysis of gig work through the lens of job quality.

The findings of the study revealed that jobs within the gig economy have a number of characteristics traditionally associated with 'bad jobs' (Kalleberg, 2011; Ritter & Ankner, 2002; Vidal, 2013) providing poor quality across a number of job quality dimensions with evidence of high levels of job and wage stability (e.g. Section 6.1.2 and Section 6.2), limited access to employment benefits (e.g. Section 6.1.3), few opportunities for formal training and career development (e.g. Section 6.8 and Section 6.10), low levels of worker participation (e.g. Section 6.7) and physically and mentally demanding work (e.g. Section 6.4 and Section 6.5.2). In accordance with theories of job quality, as a result of these

characteristics, individuals working in the gig economy are likely to experience low levels of work-related well-being. For example, low pay and wage uncertainty are associated with issues of economic insecurity and poverty and higher levels of stress and ill health amongst workers (Grzywacz & Dooley, 2003). In addition, jobs which are low paid are often low quality in other ways (Kalleberg & Vaissy, 2005; Munoz de Bustillo, et al., 2011) with a failure to address issues of low pay, job insecurity and opportunities for progression increasing the likelihood of individuals becoming trapped in a cycle of poverty (Ray, et al., 2010). An example of this is provided in Section 6.1.2 where Jonny describes his experience of having to borrow money in order to cope during periods of low demand. Similarly, job insecurity, highlighted within Section 6.2 as a common characteristic of gig work, has been linked to an increased risk of experiencing adverse health effects such as chronic stress (Sverke, et al., 2002) and poor mental health (Lewchuk, 2017). Thus, the poor quality of gig jobs when considered against these dimensions poses a risk to the longer-term well-being of these workers.

However, whilst evidence was provided that these jobs differed from what have traditionally been considered as 'good jobs', this was not the complete picture of gig work. For example, the conditions of employment offered by different platforms in the gig economy were found to vary with evidence provided of differences in the terms and conditions of employment offered by different platforms regarding such things as the type of contract used, the level of support provided and individual wage levels, including the level of personal financial risk and the costs of working this way. An example of this is seen within Section 6.1 where the differences in the payment systems and wage levels across the different platforms are highlighted. To this end, the quality of jobs offered through the hospitality platform provided a better quality of work experience when considered against a number of key dimensions of job quality with these workers being provided access to social benefits, such as rights to holiday pay and minimum wage, greater levels of worker support and longer term career development opportunities within the sector, features which were frequently absent in consideration of courier and taxi work. In addition to variations in the quality of jobs between different platforms, differences also existed between platforms operating within the same sector. Indeed, some courier platforms (e.g. Deliveroo) required workers to book shifts in advance, reducing the autonomy of these workers over when and for how long to work. Overall these findings support the view put forward by Kalleberg and Dunn that the quality of jobs in the gig economy vary with differences, not only in relation to wage levels and

control exercised by different platforms (ibid) but also in regards to other dimensions and aspects of job quality including opportunities for advancement and levels of worker support.

Therefore, it can be said that this facet of the findings challenges the view of some prior studies that gig jobs are unequivocally bad (see for example, Kessler, 2018; TUC, 2016; O'Connor, 2017). Indeed although evidence is provided to support the view that jobs in the gig economy lack a number of characteristics of what would traditionally be considered good jobs (e.g. those providing job stability, access to social benefits and participation rights (ILO, 2017; Clark, 2005) the subjective experience of workers was that gig work also provided a range of benefits, including in regards to other dimensions of job quality such as the levels of flexibility and control over when, how and where to work (see Section 6.3.1 and Section 6.1).

In addition, despite the deficit in a number of objective characteristics of good work, the subjective experience of participants revealed a more hidden, complex and, at times, contradictory story. For example, whilst it appears, objectively, that gig work provides low levels of autonomy as a result of the provision of step by step instructions through the app, the use of digital algorithms to monitor and discipline workers and in response to fluctuations in consumer demand, the subjective experience of participants was of high levels of autonomy in their work with this being identified as a key benefit from working this way. Similarly, despite the contractually insecure nature of gig work and high levels of job instability, a characteristic traditionally used to distinguish between good and bad jobs (Kalleberg, 2011) the subjective experience of workers was that they did not feel insecure and that this lack of security seemed, at the time, to be a worthwhile trade-off in return for the benefits of gig work such as the higher levels of flexibility over working hours. These findings provide an example of how jobs which are objectively bad, may be experienced as ‘good’ or ‘fulfilling’ by those undertaking them, extending the work of Knox, et al., (2015) and Adler and Adler (2004). Indeed, evidence in the current study indicated gig workers were less concerned with the negative aspects of gig work, instead focusing on what they perceived to be the positive aspects of gig work including greater levels of flexibility over working hours, improved safety at work higher levels of autonomy and enjoyment of the work undertaken.

The following section will consider in greater detail how individual circumstances, including the needs and preferences of those working in the gig economy, shaped individual's subjective quality of work experiences in order to better understand under what conditions and for whom gig work may represent good or bad work.

8.2 Individual Fit

In addition to variations in the quality of jobs across different platforms within the gig economy, individuals' quality of work experience also varied in accordance with individual factors including the extent to which working in the gig economy represented a genuine choice and the level of dependence upon income generated from gig work. To this end, the findings of the study reinforce the importance of individual fit (Adler & Adler, 2005; Knox, et al., 2015; Holman, 2013) and the need for job quality to be defined in such a way as to take account of the match between the individual and the job. For example, several participants referred to their job as being good for them, for a specific purpose and often on a short term basis, e.g. whilst finishing their studies, whilst in between employment or in order to supplement income from, for example, unemployment and pension benefits or from a self-owned business (see Section 7.2). Indeed, the flexible nature of gig work and the lack of any obligation to work was perceived as particularly beneficial for those who, due to other commitments such as family and education, or restraints such as health issues, felt unable to undertake or apply for more permanent forms of employment.

However, whilst several participants reported positive experiences of gig work with some even referring to their work within the gig economy as being like a 'paid hobby' (see Section 6.5.1), there was recognition that this may not be the same for everyone and that whether you had a good or bad experiences of good work was likely to depend on individual factors such as life stage, the extent to which gig work represents a sole source of employment and income and the extent to which someone had the right 'characteristics' for the job. For example, a number of participants referred to the need for those undertaking gig work to be self-motivated, to have good customer service skills, high levels of dependability and the required stamina (see Section 7.2). This provides an example of how, in addition to demographic characteristics such as race and gender (Cooke, et al., 2013; Green, 2006; Kalleberg, 2011; Pocock & Skinner, 2012), individual worker characteristics can influence individuals perceptions and experiences of their work.

In addition to the impact of worker characteristics, the findings also highlighted the impact of individuals needs and personal circumstance including, for example, their dependence upon their earnings from their work within the gig economy. For example, whilst gig work was generally perceived as an adequate job over the short term (e.g. whilst in between jobs) or for those who had an alternative, dependable source of income and who wanted to make a bit of extra money, gig work was perceived as a poor alternative to secure forms of employment for those relying upon this as a primary way of making a living over the longer term (see section 8.2.3). This perceived divergence in experience between those working in the gig economy on a part-time, temporary, supplementary basis and those earning a living in gig economy builds upon the evidence of prior studies which have shown how different job-holders can have different experiences and perceptions of the same job as a result of their personal circumstances and correlated needs and preferences (Adler & Adler, 2005).

In addition to having an impact on individual's overall perceptions and experiences of gig work, individual differences also had an impact on the perceived importance of specific job quality dimensions. For example, those working in the gig economy in order to top up income and who were not dependent upon their income from the gig economy, were less vulnerable to issues of wage and job instability (see Section 6.1.2) and expressed little concern over the lack of job security. In contrast, individuals who were reliant upon their income from gig work found their experiences of flexibility to be constrained due to the need to work, for example, during peak times in order to generate sufficient income (see Section 6.3). Similarly, those who had a preference for flexible or self-employment frequently placed greater importance on dimensions of job quality such as flexibility and autonomy whilst those who had prior experience being self-employed had commonly developed coping mechanisms which mitigated the impact of, for example, a lack of employment benefits, reducing the perceived importance of these dimensions. Furthermore, the extent to which individuals had a positive experience and perception of gig work was also heavily influenced by the extent to which working in the gig economy was a 'voluntary' choice. Indeed, those working this way out of necessity rather than choice (e.g. due to difficulties in securing the type of employment they desired) were more likely to report dissatisfaction with their job. This builds upon the evidence from prior studies regarding the importance of job congruence and the impact of voluntariness of employment type on individuals perception of their job (Loughlin & Murray, 2013; Kauhanen & Natti, 2015).

However, whilst the findings of the study provided evidence of a more positive relationship between gig working and job quality than has been found by some prior studies (Field & Forsey, 2017; O'Connor, 2017; UNITE, 2017), a possible explanation for the discrepancies in objective versus subjective evaluations of the quality of jobs in the gig economy relates to the broader labour market context and the potential normalisation of working conditions which, under traditional models of job quality, would be considered bad. For example, workers often compared their precarity against those in other forms of 'flexible' employment such as zero hours contracts as well as secure employment which has also become increasingly precarious (Gallie, et al., 2016) thus resulting in perceptions of gig work as being no less secure than available alternatives. Similarly, whilst wage levels were commonly seen as comparable with those provided for undertaking the same type of work outwith the gig economy, courier, taxi and hospitality work all represent forms of 'lower skilled' service provision (Balaram, et al., 2017) the likes of which have been associated with an inferior quality of work experience (Tangian, 2007). In addition, the average real wage in the UK remains 30% lower than it was 10 years ago despite a reported acceleration in wage growth and employment levels being at their lowest since the 1970s (Jackson & Samson, 2018), resulting in a reduction in wage expectation. In addition, although the lack of opportunity for participation was perceived by many gig workers as unimportant, due to the supplementary or temporary nature of jobs within the gig economy, with evidence that unions play a key role in securing improvements in job quality (Hoque, et al., 2017), the low levels of union representation represent a significant barrier in securing improvements in the quality of jobs. Further to this, with casual or temporary work arrangements perceived as being synonymous with the work undertaken, it could be argued that for many of the participants in the current study, there are few expectations of 'good' working conditions.

Nevertheless, whilst the subjective perception of job quality is questionable at times, as a result of, for example, the tendency for these workers to engage in selective social comparisons that enable them to view their circumstance in a more positive light (Bosmans, et al., 2016), the findings support the importance of recognising how gig work is experienced on the frontline in attempts to provide a more holistic understanding of the quality of jobs (Kalleberg & Dunn, 2017). In addition, the findings also assist in explaining specific studies where evidence has been provided of high levels of acceptance and satisfaction amongst gig workers (e.g Broughton, et al., 2018).

8.2.3 The Temporal Nature of Job Quality

A key theme to emerge during interview when exploring the impact of contextual factors on gig workers quality of work experience was the perception that gig work did not represent a sustainable form of employment over the longer term. To this end, individual's positive experiences of working within the gig economy were highly temporal or based on current experience. For example, and despite the perceived limited impact of such things as contract type and opportunities for progression on individual's perceptions and experiences of job quality over the short term, these negative aspects of gig work were central to individuals perceptions of a career in the gig economy as unsustainable over the longer term.

Indeed, whilst a small number of participants intended to earn a full time living from gig work for the foreseeable future and several participants reported that they would continue to use gig work as a supplementary/temporary source of income if required, the majority of those for whom gig work represented a primary source of income had future career aspirations unrelated to their current job within the gig economy. For example, some workers had career aspirations related to their studies, others had plans to start their own business and some, whilst unsure exactly what sector they might work in, indicated that they would seek more secure forms of employment in the future (see Section 7.3). These findings reinforce the temporal nature of job quality which, whilst recognised as important by some studies, in particular, those exploring the challenges for organisations of meeting the needs and preferences of an ageing workforce (see for example, Burke, et al., 2013; Stedmon, et al., 2012), is an aspect of job quality which is has received little attention within the broader job quality literature. The findings of this study suggest that what makes a job adequate for now is not the same as what makes a job good over the longer term. As such and in order to advance our understanding of job quality, future research into job quality would benefit from more longitudinal approaches which can explore the quality of working life for those working in the gig economy over the longer term and how the importance of the dimensions of job quality varies over time.

8.4 The Influence of Technology on Job Quality

A further key objective of the study as highlighted in Section 1.3 was to explore the impact of technology on individual's experiences and perceptions of their job. As highlighted in Section 4.6, technology is often described as a key driver of job quality (Warhurst, et al., 2017) and features centrally within broader debates regarding the

changing nature of work (Burke & Ng, 2006; Landry, et al., 2005). In considering the impact of technological advancements on the quality of work, a review of the literature revealed that debates are largely polarised. Under the optimistic scenario, technological change is seen as contributing to an upgrading of job quality as routine and repetitive tasks are replaced by automation and the demand for non-routine, creative tasks increases (Autor, et al., 2003). Conversely, the more pessimistic view predicates the erosion of job quality and the elimination of skilled work as a result of the introduction of technology, separating the worker from the production process (Braverman, 1998; Ritzer, 1993).

In exploring gig workers subjective experiences and perceptions of the platform technology used within the gig economy, the findings of the study build upon current evidence which has found that, in contrast to both optimistic and pessimistic perspectives on the impact of technology for contemporary workers, the reality is more nuanced with costs and benefits associated with the use of technology in the workplace (Chesley, 2014). Indeed, evidence is provided of a range of benefits, and downsides, associated with working this way. For example, the findings build upon the evidence of prior studies which have found technology has a positive impact on individual's overall perceptions of their job (e.g. Long, 1993). Indeed, several participants referred to the benefits of working through an 'app' on their overall work experience citing reasons such as the improved efficiency and visibility in the work process, enhanced levels of safety due to the cashless system and use of tracking software, the greater levels of temporal and spatial flexibility and sense of independence provided from working remotely and through an app on a Smartphone. The algorithmic as opposed to human control was also associated with a perceived reduction in opportunities for favouritism and discrimination at work, contributing to positive perceptions of gig working and challenging human biases within the recruitment process which have contributed to gender and racial divisions and inequality in employment for different groups of workers (see for example, Roscigno, 2007). This perception of reduced opportunities for discrimination appears to contradict the view that the reliance upon subjective rating systems and online profiles used within the gig economy may provide a new source of workplace discrimination, negatively impacting members of legally protected groups (Rosenblat, et al., 2017). In addition, the perceptions of algorithms as being less biased than traditional forms of management appears to neglect the role of human choices in the algorithmic development process and the potential gap between computational and social definitions of fairness (Lee, 2018). Thus, it could be argued that the perceived reduction of opportunities for discrimination

reflect the opaqueness of algorithmic based decision making, increasing the risk that aspects of discrimination may go unnoticed.

Indeed, although the technological aspects of gig working were generally perceived positively by participants, there were a range of downsides to working this way. For example, despite the overall enhanced efficiency associated with working through an app in comparison to more traditional working systems, a number of workers had experienced issues related to reliability in the technology including difficulties in accessing work where the app has not been working, contributing to issues of job instability and fluctuations in income (see for example, Section 6.1). Similarly, the displacement of human managers by algorithmic forms of control and the lack of direct contact, whilst perceived as beneficial in reducing opportunities for individual biases in the allocation and supervision of work, had a negative impact on individuals psychological well-being with some workers feeling unsupported and undervalued (see for example, Section 7.6). In addition, whilst technology provided opportunities to make work easier through, for example, the efficiency of having everything in one place or in the greater amount of information communicated through the app (see Section 7.3), the findings did provide evidence to support the view that technology contributes to the intensification of work (Green, 2004). Indeed, several participants referred to the fast pace of their work in the gig economy with the breakdown and payment of work activities into individual tasks for those operating through the courier and taxi platforms resulting in a tendency to undertake as many gigs as possible within as short a period of time as possible. However, whilst the findings suggest the use of technology contributed to an intensification of gig work, evidence was also provided that the higher levels of temporal flexibility allowed individuals to better manage these demands (see for example, Section 7.4), reducing the negative effects of demanding work and the overall levels of employee strain.

Following on from such matters, the following sections focuses upon the dimensions of job quality upon which technology was perceived as having the greatest impact including autonomy, flexibility and the social work environment.

8.4.1 Technology and Autonomy

In addition to influencing individual's overall perceptions of their job, the algorithmic forms of management utilised within the gig economy also had an impact upon individual's experiences of autonomy. For example and in spite of concerns over a

reduction in autonomy and the Taylorisation of digital as a result of algorithms (Brown, et al., 2010), interviews revealed that workers experienced relative autonomy over their work in the gig economy due to the absence of direct supervision. This builds upon current research which has shown that providing the opportunity for workers to manage their own worker hours, choose their location of work and undertake this work with reduced levels of supervision, can increase their experiences of autonomy (Bailey & Kurland, 2002). In addition, although performance tracking software allowed for monitoring of the labour process, the ability for management to exert direct control over how individuals conducted their work was restricted by the lack of proximity between the worker and the platform operator. To this end, the sense of anonymity provided by working through an app represented a key source of employee misbehaviour (see for example, Section 7.6). Indeed, the findings provide evidence to support the view that higher levels of anonymity provided from working through a digital platform may reduce accountability between the worker and the online intermediary, fostering bad behaviours (Forde, et al., 2017). This view is further supported by the common perception that the quality of the workforce as a whole was poor with participants from across the platforms complaining about the bad behaviour and lack of effort applied by 'other' gig workers (see for example Section 7.5). The 'othering' of individuals who were disruptive or unsuccessful in the gig economy was a common theme to emerge during interviews and reflected the competitive nature of such work.

However, despite the perceived sense of autonomy provided from working through an app, the findings did indicate restrictions through the use of 'soft control' mechanisms (see for example, Section 7.6). Indeed, the need to achieve and maintain a certain rating represented an obvious limitation on workers autonomy, building upon evidence presented by Rosenblat and Stark (2016) with several participants referring to the need to 'keep their stats up' in order to avoid deactivation. These individualised mechanisms of control also created a sense of individual responsibility, encouraging high levels of self-management through a process of what Shapiro (2018) has described as 'nudging' where individuals' interests are aligned with those of the companies, through, for example, the risk of deactivation. This process of nudging may assist in explaining why, despite evidence of restrictions on autonomy, individuals perceived themselves as having high levels of autonomy (see for example, Section 6.6). Indeed, the reliance upon 'hidden' digital control mechanisms assisted in creating the illusion of high levels of autonomy (e.g. the ability to accept or reject individual tasks) whilst encouraging individuals to

engage in desired behaviours (e.g. accepting tasks in order to maintain a high acceptance rate and avoid deactivation).

8.4.2 Technology, Flexibility and Work-Life Balance

Despite concerns over the negative impacts of technology on work-life balance due to the greater levels of permeability between work and non-work life (Eikhof, et al., 2007; Westman, 2001), the findings of the study provide evidence, in part, to support the view that technology can have a positive impact on work-life balance (Hill, et al., 2003), providing workers greater flexibility in order to meet their individual needs. Indeed, several respondents referred to the improvements in work-life balance due to the ability to see what work was available on the app and the autonomy regarding what work to accept and when to log on and off (see for example, Section 7.4). This perceived ability to work 'on-demand' provided greater flexibility than more traditional forms of permanent and flexible employment where decisions over when, where or for how long to work are generally made by a manager or a recruitment agent. This facilitated the combination of gig work with other forms of work and leisure activities including, for example, caring work, alternative forms of paid work and travelling aspirations.

These findings highlight the difference between worker controlled flexible scheduling and manager controlled flexible scheduling, the latter of which has been found to be damaging to perceptions of job quality in addition to representing a barrier to work-life balance (Wood, 2016). Indeed, the ability to exercise a certain degree of choice over when to work by choosing when to log on or which jobs to apply for/accept may help to explain the more positive picture presented here than is provided in other studies focused on other forms of 'flexible' work such as zero hours contracts (see for example, Bracha & Burke, 2018).

8.4.3 Technology and the Social Work Environment

Despite concerns over the social isolation of remote workers and declining human contact at work (Brione, 2017), the findings also indicated that whilst technology had led to a highly dispersed workforce, it also provided new ways for individuals to interact with other workers. For example, the majority of respondents referred to being part of an online community with social media forums and WhatsApp groups commonly used by workers to communicate with each other. These forums provided a source of support for workers in addition to providing opportunities to share experiences and, in some cases, to arrange

social events. Furthermore, the support provided through the forums and the sense of 'community' identified by participants assisted in mitigating against the negative impacts associated with the perceived lack of support provided by the platform operator. This builds upon existing research which suggests these support networks are beneficial in the mitigation of other negative workplace factors (Karasek, et al., 1998) in addition to providing evidence of the positive impact of social support on the quality of work experience.

In addition, some respondents referred to the use of private groups to discuss common dissatisfactions as well in the organisation and mobilisation of workers (see for example, Section 6.9). These findings build upon the evidence of previous studies which have found that forums can facilitate collective action for a highly dispersed workforce (Johnston & Land-Kazlauskas, 2018). Indeed, whilst the digital technology used within the gig economy made it easy for employers to deactivate workers, it also left platforms vulnerable to unofficial collective action such as the mass logging off undertaken by uber drivers in 2019 (BBC, 2019). Thus, whilst social interaction in the traditional sense (e.g. between two individuals working together in pursuit of some common goal, often within an organisational setting) might not exist in the same way within the gig economy, new forms of online social support networks have emerged, reducing the social isolation of workers and leading to increased opportunities for collectivism. This builds upon prior research (Cohen & Richards, 2015) by providing an example of how networking sites such as Facebook are being used by workers to cope with the pressures of contemporary employment, offering a source of social support for gig workers and providing opportunities for new forms of collectivism in sectors where union representation is lacking.

8.5 Conclusions

The aim of this chapter was to relate the findings outlined in the previous two chapters to evidence, theories and debates in the wider job quality literature, highlighting their significance in contributing to current knowledge related to job quality and gig work. In examining the extent to which gig work is consistent with traditional notions of good work (see Objective 1, Section 1.3), the findings from the study support the view that the dynamics that generate good and bad jobs in the gig economy are more complex and more varied than can be captured through a polarised assessment of such jobs as either good or bad (Kalleberg & Dunn, 2017). Indeed, in spite of evidence of an absence of job attributes

traditionally associated with 'good work' including, for example, employment benefits, job and wage security and opportunities for participation, the subjective experience of those undertaking gig work was more nuanced with high levels of job satisfaction amongst these workers, reflecting the complexities in determining the quality of gig work. To this end, the findings revealed variations in the quality of gig jobs across different platforms in addition to providing evidence of more positive aspects of gig work including in regards of levels of flexibility. Furthermore, in exploring how individual and contextual circumstances influence the quality of work experience (see Objective 2, Section 1.3) the findings build upon the work of prior studies (e.g. Adler and Adler., 2005; Knox, et al., 2015; Jones, et al., 2016) by revealing how individual's quality of work experience varied in accordance with, for example, the needs and preferences of those undertaking gig work as well as the existence of suitable labour market alternatives, further complicating the process of evaluating the quality of gig jobs.

The study also sought to explore the influence of technology on individual's experiences and perception of gig work (see Objective 3, Section 1.3). To this end, the study contributed to broader debates regarding the impact of technological advancements on job quality (e.g. Long, 1993) with evidence provided of both positive and negative effects of technology on individual's quality of work experience. For example, working remotely through an application on a Smartphone was associated with improvements in levels of autonomy, flexibility and safety at work. However, evidence was also provided of less desirable practices including in the use of coercive control mechanisms, employee surveillance and the breakdown of work activities into individual tasks which, in some cases, contributed to an intensification of work.

The discussion lends itself to the final part of the research. In the following chapter (Chapter 9), the thesis is concluded with a discussion of the theoretical and practical implications to arise from the findings, but in doing so, also acknowledging the limitations of the current study and providing ideas for future related research.

Chapter 9 - Conclusions

9.0 Introduction

This chapter (Chapter 9) represents the final part of the thesis. Put differently, the chapter is designed to bring the study to a conclusion after extensive discussions of the relevant literature, theory, methodology and key findings related to gig work and job quality. Specifically, the purpose of the following chapter is to highlight contributions of the thesis to current knowledge related to job quality and gig work. Further purposes of the chapter include discussing the wider implications of the study, limitations of the study and prospects for future research related to job quality and gig work.

The chapter begins with a reflection upon the extent to which the study has met the overall objectives identified in Chapter 1 (see Section 1.3). Following on from this, the contributions made by the study to current understandings of gig work and job quality are discussed and outlined. On the basis of the findings of the study, recommendations for policymakers, employers and labour interest groups seeking to improve the quality of gig jobs are also provided. The chapter ends by reflecting upon the strengths and limitations of the study and suggestions for future research.

9.1 Research Objectives Reconsidered

The overall aim of this research, as described in Chapter 1, was to explore an under-researched area of work and employment in contemporary society, that of the quality of jobs in the gig economy. In order to achieve this aim, research was conducted from an interpretivist perspective, recognising the intricacies and complexities of job quality and that certain job characteristics may be interpreted differently by different groups of workers (e.g. Warr, 2007). To this end, concerns have been raised over positivistic approaches to job quality which may present an oversimplification of job quality, failing to recognise the influence of individual and contextual factors on job choice and perceptions of job quality (Findlay, et al., 2013; Cooke, et al., 2013). Indeed, a particular benefit of the interpretivist approach is the ability to generate rich and detailed descriptions of individuals subjective experiences and perceptions of job quality components and aspects of gig work contributing to a more holistic understanding of job quality and gig work. A key strength of this study was to highlight cases where work which may be seen as objectively bad, is in fact perceived to be less problematic for those experiencing it and how those undertaking gig work may frame their experiences in a way that outsiders have no experience or awareness of.

In support of the overall aim of the study, three more specific objectives were identified, each of which will be considered in turn in the following sub-sections.

9.1.1 Objective One: To Explore Theoretical Perspectives on Job Quality and Examine the Extent to Which Gig Work is Consistent with Current Notions of Good Work

The first objective of the study was to explore current theoretical perspectives or understanding of job quality and what a good job is and to examine the extent to which gig work reflects these current notions of good work. This objective was met through an extensive review of current literature related to job quality and gig work as well as through the use of semi-structured interviews with individuals working in the gig economy. More specifically, a list of 'key' job quality components were identified through an in-depth review of job quality literature and the frameworks that have previously been utilised in the measurement and assessment of job quality (see Chapter 4 – Theories of Job Quality) against which individuals experiences of gig work were compared. As highlighted in Chapter 4, a key benefit of this approach is that it allows for the comparison of different jobs and changes over time (Burgess, 2003) in addition to providing a framework through which individuals experiences and perceptions of gig work can be understood. Further, a qualitative research design, such as the one adopted in this study, enables individuals perspectives and experiences of 'key' job quality components to be unravelled (Hannif, et al., 2008), revealing the importance of these dimensions and their influence upon the quality of work experience for individuals undertaking gig work. The findings related to individual's experiences of key job quality components are presented in Chapter 6 before being brought together and discussed within the context of broader debates regarding individual fit, in Chapter 7.

In considering the extent to which the findings of the study are consistent with current notions of good work, a key contribution of the study was to highlight the limitations of polarised assessments of job quality which fail to encapsulate the nuances of the concept (see contributions to knowledge section 9.2). To this end, the findings revealed both positive and negative aspects of gig work in addition to highlighting variations in how individuals perceived and experienced key job quality dimensions, across different platforms and, as is highlighted in the following section, in accordance with issues of individual fit. Indeed, whilst gig work could be considered 'bad' work when assessed against a number of traditional job quality dimensions such as wages and job security, the perceived importance of these dimensions to participants varied and were often interpreted more broadly than is commonly found within the job quality literature. For

example, whilst traditionally opportunities for advancement have been associated with promotional opportunities and climbing the hierarchical ladder, something which was evidently absent in regard to gig work, this study provided examples of perceived 'alternative' opportunities for advancement including in regard to networking and entrepreneurial activities. Thus, whilst gig work cannot be said to be wholly consistent with traditional notions of good work, lacking a number of characteristics such as formal job security and wage stability, this is not to say that gig work could be described as unequivocally bad work. For example, for some participants gig work represented a flexible form of temporary or casual work which provided opportunities to generate or supplement income on an 'on-demand' basis, something which was perceived to be lacking in regards to more traditional forms of casual work such as agency and zero hours work, where access to such work remains dependent upon a 'gatekeeper'. Therefore, in order to better understand what makes a gig job good or bad and to ensure the effectiveness of initiatives aimed at improving job quality, it can be argued that models of job quality need to change to reflect the uniqueness of atypical forms of employment such as gig work, as much as gig work needs to change to meet traditional models of job quality. As such, a key objective for future research is to further explore variations in the perceived importance of key job quality dimensions for individuals in different types of nonstandard and atypical employment, detaching notions of job quality from features of traditional or standard employment and recognising there is no one-size-fits-all approach to job quality.

9.1.2 Objective Two: To Explore How Individual and Contextual Factors Shape and Influence Individuals' Quality of Work Experience

With recognition that job characteristics are socially situated and are mediated by individual differences (Brown, et al., 2007; Knox, et al., 2015; Jones, et al., 2016) the second specific objective was to explore how individual factors shaped individual's quality of work experience within the gig economy context. This was achieved through an exploration of the demographics of participants as well as their personal and career background, their personal circumstances and their motivations for undertaking gig work. The importance of individual differences and current evidence regarding their influence on job quality is reviewed in Chapter 4, whilst data arising from this study is presented in Chapter 7. This data was also used in Chapter 8 as a possible explanation for variations in subjective versus objective evaluations of job quality, building upon current knowledge

regarding the conditions under which, and for whom, gig work might be experienced as good or bad.

Indeed, it was found that individuals personal circumstances, such as the extent to which the income from gig work represented a primary or supplementary source of income and whether the decision to undertake gig work was voluntary or out of necessity, had a significant impact on individuals experience of gig work and the key dimensions of job quality. For example, those for whom gig work represented a supplementary source of income were more likely to report high levels of flexibility over when to work and satisfaction with wage levels than someone who was dependent upon gig work as a sole or primary source of income. Indeed, a key finding of the study related to the temporal nature of job quality highlighting how gig work, whilst providing a number of perceived benefits for individuals over the short term, does not provide a sustainable alternative to more permanent and secure forms of employment over the longer term (see contributions to knowledge Section 9.2.3). Taken together, these findings highlight the fluidity of job quality and the impact of personal circumstances and individual needs and preferences, not only on individuals experiences and perceptions of working in the gig economy, but on the perceived importance of job quality dimensions for different workers, and at different points in time. This reinforces the importance of incorporating aspects of worker voice and choice in developing a more comprehensive picture of job quality and improving opportunities for job-worker match within the gig economy and beyond.

9.1.3 Objective Three: To Explore the Perceived Influence of Technology on Individual's Experiences and Perceptions of Gig Work.

With recognition that job characteristics are also influenced by technology (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and given the centrality of platform technology to work in the gig economy (e.g. Stewart & Stanford, 2017), a further objective of the study was to explore the impact of technology on the quality of work experience. This was achieved by exploring individual's experiences and perceptions of platform technology and of working through a digital application on their Smartphone. Current debates regarding the impact of technology and technological advancements on the nature and quality are considered in Chapter 2 and again in Chapter 4. Data arising from this study regarding individual's experiences and perceptions of technology and of working through an 'app' is presented in Chapter 7 before being further discussed in Chapter 8 within the context

of broader predications and debates regarding the impact of technology on the quality of jobs in contemporary society.

In considering the influences of technology on the quality of work experience, the findings of the study provided mixed results with evidence of both the positive impacts of platform technology, such as through increased levels of temporal and spatial flexibility and an enhanced sense of autonomy, as well as negative impacts, including, for example, in regards to the inflexibility of the technology and the depersonalisation of the relationship between the worker and the platform operator. However, whilst the study was able to explore the use and perceived impact of platform technology of individuals' experiences of undertaking gig work, it is not clear to what extent this method of working represented an improvement on prior ways of working. For example, whilst some participants were able to compare their experience of working through an application on the Smartphone to prior experience of working within the same sector but through more traditional methods (e.g. in comparing taxi work organised through a telephone system versus a smartphone application) this was not the case for several participants whom had not previously undertaken courier, taxi or hospitality work or who were new to the labour market and had little prior experience against which to compare. In addition, whilst the study revealed positive and negative impacts of technology on individuals' perceptions and experiences of working in the gig economy, the extent to which platform technology may provide the same benefits in other industrial settings including, for example, in regards to the retail or social care sector, remains unclear. As such, whilst the study has provided an important insight into how technology is used and perceived by individuals working in the gig economy, further research is needed in order to determine the extent to which these effects remain consistent across different occupations and industrial settings and the broader implications for job quality associated with the implementation of platform technology in more traditional work places.

9.2 Contribution to Knowledge

Following on from an assessment of the extent to which the objectives set out in Section 1.3 were met, is the need to set out the main contributions of the current study. These are detailed in sub-headings below.

9.2.1 Contribution to Knowledge 1: A Unique Empirical Contribution on Job Quality and Gig Work

The study makes an empirical contribution to an emerging body of literature related to job quality and gig work (Kalleberg & Dunn, 2017; Broughton, et al., 2018; Wood, et al., 2018; Forde, et al., 2017), building upon knowledge regarding individual's experiences and perceptions of key job quality components and how individuals respond to the opportunities and challenges associated with working in the gig economy. To this end, the findings of the study support the theory put forward by Kalleberg and Dunn (2017) that gig work is not simply bad work, revealing both positive and negatives aspects of working in the gig economy and variations in the quality of work experience, not only as a result of variations in the terms and conditions of employment offered by different platform operators, but also as a result of individual circumstances, needs and preferences. In addition, the findings help to explain the seemingly high levels of satisfaction and acceptance reported by some previous studies (Broughton, et al., 2018; Forde, et al., 2017), providing an insight into how work which may appear to an outsider as 'bad' may be perceived as less problematic by those doing it and how those undertaking such work may frame their experiences in ways which outsiders have little understanding or awareness of. Evidence related to the positive and negative aspects of gig work and the variations on the quality of gig jobs is presented in Chapter 6 and discussed further in Chapter 8.

9.2.2 Contribution to Knowledge 2: Building Understanding of the Importance of Job Quality Dimensions within the Gig Economy Context

In addition to providing evidence related to gig workers experiences of key dimensions of job quality, the findings of the study also indicated that some job attributes were more important than others as determinates of job quality and that those perceived as most important by gig workers were not always consistent with traditional conceptualisations of good work. For example, whilst, traditionally, job security has been considered a core component of good work (Jencks, et al., 1988; Clark, 2005; Kalleberg & Vaissy, 2005), in the current study this dimension was perceived to be of lower importance than flexibility partly as a result of the expected temporary/supplementary nature of gig work (see Section 7.1.3). This variation in the perceived importance of job quality components to different workers builds upon the work of Holman, (2013) and Jones, et al., (2016), reinforcing the importance of adopting a multidimensional approach to job quality, and highlighting the limitations of quantitative approaches which, as a result of the often

arbitrary weighting of job quality dimensions (Munoz de Bustillo, et al., 2011; Osterman, 2010), may fail to capture the reality of working life and the complex trade-offs made by workers when choosing and evaluating their job.

9.2.3 Contribution to Knowledge 3: Challenging the Notion that 'Nonstandard' Jobs are Bad Jobs and Extending the Importance of Flexibility and Work-Life Balance as a Key Outcome of Job Quality.

The findings can also be said to challenge the commonly held view that nonstandard, casual work arrangements are invariably worse for workers than regular full time jobs (Appelbaum, 1992; Kalleberg, 2000; Hudson, 2007) with evidence that gig work provided a range of benefits including increased levels of flexibility for workers, a greater sense of autonomy and enjoyment of the work undertaken. Indeed, despite evidence of 'bad job' characteristics (Kalleberg, et al., 2000) including, for example, a lack of job security and limited access to employment benefits, the subjective experience of participants revealed a more nuanced picture with the majority of workers being less concerned with these problematic aspects, instead focusing on the perceived benefits of gig work including flexibility over when, where and for how long to work. This flexibility and the perceived benefit of work-life balance were key in understanding why individuals worked in the gig economy, providing evidence to support the importance of work-life balance as a key outcome of job quality (Drobnic & Gullen, 2011) and the inclusion of flexibility as a key component of job quality (Grote & Guest, 2017), within contemporary conceptualisations of good work.

9.2.4 Contribution to Knowledge 4: Extending the Importance of Individual Fit in the Conceptualisation of 'Good' Work.

Further to contributing to knowledge related to individuals experiences of a number of key job quality dimensions and the importance of these dimensions within the gig economy context, the study also contributes to debates regarding the importance of 'individual fit' in the conceptualisation of good work (Holman, 2013; Brown, et al., 2007; Kalleberg., 2011; Knox, et al., 2015), addressing a gap in the literature discussed in Chapter 4, regarding how individual factors, such as the needs and preferences of the worker, shape and influence gig workers subjective quality of work experience. Indeed, whilst worker characteristics are increasingly recognised as important factors, the incorporation of worker preferences and understanding of how personal and contextual factors influence employee's experiences of different job types represents an area of job quality research which remains under-developed (Brown, et al., 2007; Holman, 2013). In

exploring the influence of personal fators on individuals experiences of working in the gig economy, the findings build upon evidence of prior studies which have highlighted the importance of employment status congruence (Loughlin & Murray, 2013) with evidence provided in the current study of significant variations in individuals perceptions and experiences of aspects of gig work as good or bad in accordance with the extent to which working this way was out of choice as opposed to necessity. The findings of this study also revealed how personal circumstances including levels of personal financial literacy and dependence upon income from gig work, as well as the expected length of job tenure, influenced individuals subjective experiences and perceptions of their job as good or bad. Indeed, a key contribution of the study, as highlighted in section 9.1.2, was to highlight how, in spite of positive accounts of gig working over the short-term, a job in the gig economy was commonly perceived as being unsustainable as a way of making a living over the longer term. This demonstrates the temporal nature of job quality in the gig economy and that what makes a job adequate for now is not necessarily the same as what makes a job good over the long term with the need for further research in order to understand the longer-term implications of the 'gigification' of work.

9.2.5 Contribution to Knowledge 5: Extending the Importance of the Labour Market Context in the Conceptualisation of 'Good' Work.

In addition to the importance of 'fit' between the job and the individual needs and preferences of the worker, the study also contributes to current debates regarding the influence of changes in the nature of work and the broader labour market context, in shaping individuals subjective perceptions of job quality (Knox, et al., 2015; Cooke, et al., 2013; Holman, 2013). Indeed, several participants referred to their job within the gig economy not simply as being 'good' but as being 'better' than available labour market alternatives. As such, it could be argued that the positive findings provided in the study, rather than simply being reflective of gig jobs as good jobs, may reflect a wider erosion of job quality and the normalisation of inferior working conditions as a result of changes in the broader labour market context which were discussed in Chapter 2. For example, the rise in casual and temporary employment in the UK labour market over recent years has been well documented (Moore, et al., 2017), representing a growth in work which is generally less secure than standard jobs, less likely to be unionised and which provides limited access to workplace rights and protections (Kalleberg, et al., 2000; Rubery, et al., 2018). In addition, with evidence of increasing levels of precarity and in work-poverty even amongst more permanent jobs (Desmarez, 2000; Grzegorzewska & Thevenot,

2013), it is likely that workers expectations of job quality have been reduced. This highlights how purely subjective evaluations and the use of job satisfaction as a proxy for job quality may be problematic, further reinforcing the importance of adopting a multidimensional approach to job quality.

9.2.6 Contribution to Knowledge 6: Advancing Knowledge Related to The Impact of Platform Technology on the Quality of Work Experience

In addition to contributing to current knowledge regarding the quality of gig work and the factors influencing individuals quality of work experience, the findings of the study also contribute to current debates, discussed in Chapter 2 and Chapter 4, related to the impact of technology on job quality (e.g. Long, 1993; Chesley, 2014; Rubery & Grimshaw, 2001), revealing how technology and working through an 'app' influenced individuals quality of work experience within the gig economy. As discussed in Chapter 2, technology features centrally within debates regarding the changing nature of work (Zuboff, 1988; Landry, et al., 2005; Burke & Ng, 2006) and the so called 'fourth industrial revolution' (Schwab, 2017) yet empirical studies regarding the new jobs being created and the impact of technology on existing jobs and the employee experience, remains in its infancy (Cascio & Montealegre, 2016; Kosfeld & Siemens, 2011; Brione, 2017). The findings of the study assist in addressing this gap in knowledge, revealing the perceived impact of platform technology on individual's experiences and perceptions of a digitally enabled form of work, gig work.

Indeed, in spite of concerns over the 'Taylorisation' of work as a result of technological advancements (Brown, et al., 2010; Taylor & Bain, 1999) the findings of this study build upon the evidence provided by Wood et, al., (2018) which demonstrated how new forms of algorithmic control, such as those used within the gig economy, can facilitate higher levels of autonomy, task variety and flexibility. Similarly, whilst concerns have previously been raised over increased levels of work-related stress and work-life imbalance as a result of the permeation of work in home life (Eikhof, et al., 2007; Guest, 2017) the findings appeared to contradict this view with evidence that workers felt they had greater levels of flexibility and a better work-life balance due to the ability to work 'on demand' through the app. The findings also provide an example of how technology, and in particular social networking sites, are being used by workers to cope with the pressures of contemporary employment (e.g. Cohen & Richards, 2015). To this end and in spite of concerns over the contribution of communication technology to social isolation (Brione, 2017) evidence is provided within the study of how social media and WhatsApp

groups can assist in mitigating against some of the negative aspects of gig work and remote working more generally, by providing an alternative source of social support and opportunities for online communities.

Despite these positive findings there were, however, a number of perceived downsides to working through an 'app'. To this end, the reduced depth of human interaction with the platform operator appeared to have a negative impact on workers attachment towards the platform operator, a key aspect of organisational commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1997), resulting in negative attitudes towards the platform and misbehaviour, as demonstrated in the concerns raised by participants over the quality of the workforce (see Section 7.5). This builds upon the evidence of prior studies which have demonstrated an erosion of the social contract between employers and workers as a result of changes in the nature of work including the introduction of new technology (Cappelli, et al., 1997; Rubin & Brody, 2005). In addition, in spite of positive perceptions of technology, the findings revealed aspects of work intensification and increased levels of control through the use of performance tracking software, consistent with pessimistic theories concerning the degradation of work (Marx, 2013; Braverman, 1998). The perceived sense of disposability amongst participants can also be said to reflect the view that technology may lead to erosion in the value of 'unskilled' work (Brione, 2017). Further empirical research is however needed in order to explore the generalisability of these findings and the possible and likely impacts of platform technology across different sectors and within different labour markets.

9.3 Wider Implications of Findings

On top of providing contributions to knowledge, the findings also appear to have a range of wider implications for stakeholders in the gig economy. The findings have, for example, implications for policy makers, platform operators and labour interest groups seeking to understand where improvements can be made in the quality of gig work. These implications are considered in the sub-sections below.

9.3.1 Changes to the Legal Framework Surrounding Gig Work

Whilst the call for reform of the legal framework is in no way novel, the findings from this study can be used to inform such reform, providing for an evidence based approach to policy development which can assist in the achievement of the 'good work for all' agenda. To this end, the findings detailed in Chapters 6 and 7 highlight how the current regulatory framework in the UK contributes to a trade-off between job quality

dimensions, limiting aspects of workers choice relating to the type of employment undertaken. Indeed, a key motivating factor for undertaking gig work related to the increased levels of flexibility, a job attribute which was perceived as lacking from permanent, secure forms of employment, thus giving rise to a trade-off between this aspect of job quality and other key dimensions such as employment benefits and job security. The complex legal framework in the UK and the distinction in the legal rights provided to different categories of worker based upon increasingly outdated principles of standard employment such as 'control', 'mutuality of obligation' or 'economic risk', has resulted in the denial of basic employment rights for those contracted under flexible working arrangements. As a result of the trade-off between flexibility and security and the historic litigation approach used to determine employment status, the legal re-classification of gig workers as 'employees' entitling them to a full range of employment rights including rights not to be unfairly dismissed, may have a simultaneously negative effect, removing some of the current benefits experienced by gig workers including in regards the absence of obligation to undertake work and the consequential flexibility and sense of freedom provided over when and where to work.

Furthermore, whilst a limited extension of employment rights through a legal re-classification of those working in the gig economy as 'workers'[15] may assist in addressing some of the challenges associated with gig work including issues of exploitative pay though the provision of minimum wage protection, whilst entailing fewer restrictions on the freedom and flexibility of workers, it arguably does not go far enough in addressing key challenges faced by gig workers. For example, a re-classification of the self-employed as 'workers' would do little to protect these individuals from, for example, arbitrary or unfair deactivation. In addition, it would still leave these workers without key employment rights enjoyed by those who have full 'employee' status including rights to sick pay, maternity pay and redundancy pay.

As such, in order to avoid a race to the bottom in terms of labour standards and to protect the rights of individuals undertaking gig work, a regulatory framework needs to be provided which is detached from traditional notions of full-time employment. This would reduce opportunities for employers to manipulate the current framework through the use

[15] The worker classification represents the third legal employment status in the UK. Individuals classified as workers are afforded a more limited range of employment protections than those classified as employees under the Employment Rights Act 1996.

of bogus self-employment agreements whilst providing opportunities for those in more permanent forms of employment to enjoy greater levels of flexibility. This harmonisation may assist in creating greater equality of experience for those undertaking flexible and fixed forms of employment.

Furthermore, with evidence provided in the study of variations in the subjective experience of those working in the gig economy out of choice and those working this way out of necessity, a clear policy issue is how to prevent the negative consequences related to involuntary atypical employment. One way of achieving this proposed by (Nekoei & Weber, 2017) is through the extension of unemployment benefits which may help to mitigate the likelihood of individuals undertaking gig work out of necessity. To this end, the growth in the number of people undertaking gig work may be partly attributed to the failure of the current benefits system in meeting rising living costs with those in receipt of such benefits, including for example, students, pensioners and the unemployed, in some cases undertaking gig work out of necessity as a means of covering basic living expenses.

9.3.2 Opportunities for Effective Voice and The Role of Trade Unions in Securing Improvements in Job Quality for Gig Workers

With evidence that trade unions play a key role in securing improvements in job quality (Hoque, et al., 2017), the low levels of union representation identified within the study represent a significant barrier in securing improvements in the quality of jobs. In addition, the self-employed status of a large proportion of gig workers and the competitive nature of gig work can be said to represent a form of 'procedural individualisation' whereby collective mechanisms for negotiating terms and conditions of employment have been eroded (Brown, et al., 2000). As such, and is evidenced within this study, these workers find themselves with little opportunity for effective voice in terms and conditions of employment. This lack of opportunity for collective voice, in part, as a consequence of restrictive trade union laws, is likely to have implications for both workers and employers, contributing to negative emotions which in turn can impact worker motivation, commitment, productivity and performance (Perlow & Williams, 2003). Furthermore, the voicing of grievances through public channels, as witnessed in the recent Uber boycott (BBC, 2019), may have a negative impact on a platforms reputation with potential implications for their ability to recruit workers in the future as well as for issues of consumer demand. In order to reduce the negative implications of a lack of opportunity

for effective voice and re-balance the power between platforms and workers (Vandaele, 2018), national and organisational policies are needed which support the development of more inclusive business models and encourage dialogue at both the individual and collective levels. Whilst opportunities for collective voice are unlikely to be achieved without broader reform of trade union legislation in the UK, the findings from the study highlight the importance and potential benefits of such reforms in improving and protecting job quality.

9.3.3 Moving Towards a Best Practice Approach

Finally, in considering the implications of the findings for platform operators, the study reveals that how platform operators organise work will influence individual's quality of work experience with perceived variations in the quality of jobs offered by different platforms. As such, it can be said that platform operators have significant scope to improve the quality of gig jobs through, for example, the provision of formal training and the development of effective worker support mechanisms. In an era of globalisation, ability to attract and retain a sustainable workforce is likely to represent a key source of competitive advantage (Wright, et al., 1994) thus platform companies should be active in driving up labour standards through the development of 'better jobs' which adhere to ethical practices including in the protection of worker rights and well-being. A failure to do so may impact the long-term sustainability of these platforms having potentially negative impacts on workforce productivity and the supply of labour upon which these organisations depend in order to meet the needs of their customers.

9.4 Limitations of Study and Suggestions for Future Research

Whilst the current study makes an important contribution to how job quality and gig work are conceptualised, as with all research, it is not without limitations. Indeed, and as is touched upon in Chapter 5 - Methodology, the research methods used within this study inherently have a number of strengths and weaknesses which, whilst benefiting the study in some ways, limit it in others. The following section will discuss some of the limitations of the study and the impact these have on the confidence which can be placed upon the conclusions of the study.

9.4.1 Limitations

One feature of the current study which represented both a strength and limitation was the recruitment of participants across three different sectors. Whilst exploring the experiences of individuals across the different platforms provided an insight into both

common and divergent experiences for individuals working in the gig economy, this approach added to the complexity in interpreting and presenting the data with variations in the extent to which the specific nature of the task undertaken (e.g. whether undertaking courier, taxi or hospitality work) influenced individuals experience of different job quality dimensions. To this end, the aims and objectives of the project may have been overly ambitious with some aspects, such as the impact of technology on job quality, not receiving sustained attention. Indeed, and as is highlighted in Section 9.4.2, further research is needed in order to explore the generalisability of the study's findings and the impacts of technology on job quality across different sectors and within different industrial settings.

In addition, whilst the recruitment methods employed within the study assisted in accessing a largely dispersed group and provided heterogeneity regarding characteristics such as age, life stage and the extent to which gig work provided a sole, primary or supplementary source of income, the study would have benefited from greater diversity based on gender, race and disability. To this end, despite attempts to recruit more women, only six of the thirty-two participants were female. Similarly, only one participant identified as disabled and, whist there was some variation in nationalities, the majority of the participants were white Caucasian. As such, further research is needed in order to explore whether gender and racial differences in job quality exist within the gig economy and the impact of such characteristics on individual's subjective experiences of gig work.

Furthermore, the study shares some of the general strengths and limitations which are recognised as characterising qualitative research (Creswell, 1998) and which are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5. For example, whilst qualitative research can provide an insight into the subtleties and complexities of human experience, the data generated is often considered more ambiguous than quantitative data with the need for careful interpretation by the researcher the likes of which may be influenced by a range of factors including individual researcher bias. In order to mitigate the opportunity for research bias and increase confidence in the interpretation of meaning, interviews were recorded for subsequent transcription and were combined with researcher notes, allowing for additional information aids to be captured including, for example, the tone of speech and the body language of the participant.

A further limitation of the current study is the small, yet purposeful, sample of gig workers which, whilst allowing for in depth understanding or *verstehen*, limits the generalisability of the findings to the broader population. Indeed, the research was designed to be primarily exploratory in nature, suggesting possible associations on the basis of data gathered that can be empirically investigated at a later point in time. To this end, the study is based on a small sample of gig workers, working in a limited range of industrial sectors, as well as located in a specific geographical location characterised by a unique political climate and thus cannot be said to be representative of the entire population of gig workers. It is only by placing the findings of the study within the wider context of academic literature exploring issues of job quality that claims of generalisability can be explored.

9.4.2 Suggestions for Future Research

In reflecting upon the study and the limitations discussed in Section 9.4.1, a priority for future research should include studies based upon larger samples, across different industrial settings and within different and wider locations. For example, in order to better understand the impact of demographic differences on experiences and perceptions of job quality (e.g. in regard to race, gender and class), further research should be undertaken with a larger and more diverse sample of participants. In addition, in order to explore the extent to which the findings remain consistent across different international settings and within different employment regimes, a comparative approach could be undertaken, further exploring the impact of contextual factors on the quality of work experience for gig workers. Similarly, the qualitative experience of working through a platform is also likely to vary in accordance with whether the work is considered 'low-skill' or 'dirty' work, e.g. in the provision of courier or personal care services, or 'highly-skilled', for example, in the provision of legal or consultancy services. As such and in order to better understand the dynamics of good and bad work within the broader platform economy, future research should seek to explore the quality of work experience for those undertaking professional service work through online platforms.

Furthermore, whilst the current study has highlighted the divergences between the literature and lived experience in terms of job quality and good work, the cross-sectional approach does not allow for an analysis of how attitudes may change over time. Future research should consider longitudinal approaches which would provide opportunities for exploring lived experiences of job quality over time to determine the extent to which these

short-term benefits continue to outweigh the lack of security, voice and development opportunities outlined in the findings. In addition, in order to develop a more in-depth understanding of the lives and experiences of individuals working in the gig economy from the workers perspective, and to reveal any unarticulated practices which may impact issues of job quality, an ethnographic approach could be adopted, increasing propensity for pluralistic accounts and allowing issues of uniformity and variation in experience to be further explored. In addressing the limitations of the current study, further research is also required in order to better understand the impact of technology on job quality and to examine the generalisability of the findings arising from this study, exploring the impact of platform technology across different occupations and within different labour market contexts.

Finally, it is important to note that, with the exception of finishing touches, this study was conducted prior to the current, global coronavirus pandemic. Whilst at the time of writing, the longer term impacts of the pandemic and social distancing measures are as of yet, unknown, predictions have been made of the worst economic crisis since the Second World War (BBC, 2020) with gig workers, including those operating in the taxi and hospitality sectors, expected to be some of the hardest hit due to a fall in consumer demand. At the same time, previously undervalued 'low skilled' work such as courier work, has become increasingly vital as individuals around the globe have been placed under lockdown, relying upon these 'key' workers to provide essential items such as food and medicine. Indeed, with many traditional ways of working disrupted as a result of coronavirus and businesses facing a decline in consumer demand and revenue, a growing number of organisations may turn to platform based work as they seek to cut costs and find new ways of delivering their goods and services remotely. As such, a key focus for future job quality research is to explore the impact of the pandemic, not only on the quality of work in the gig economy, but on the quality of jobs more generally as governments, organisations and individuals respond to the crisis and continue to adapt to the 'new normal'.

Appendix A1 –Characteristics and Dimensions of Job Quality

The following table (Table A.1) does not represent the full range of characteristics found within he scholarship on job quality however, it has been included in order to represent the breadth of contributions to the topic and to highlight some of the similarities and differences between different conceptualisations of job quality.

Individual Job Characteristics	**Authors**
Income	(Clark, 2001); (Clark, 2005); (Foley & Schwartz, 2003); (Jencks, et al., 1988); (Kalleberg & Vaissy, 2005); (Munoz de Bustillo & Fernandez-Macias, 2005); (Mcgovern, et al., 2004); (Okay-Somerville & Scholorias, 2013) (Ritter & Ankner, 2002); (Schoekkaert, et al., 2009); (Sengupta, et al., 2009); (Weinkopf, 2009); (Grote & Guest, 2017).
Autonomy	(Barling, et al., 2003); (Clark, 2001); (Clark, 2005); (Kalleberg & Vaissy, 2005); (Jencks, et al., 1988); (Kelliher & Anderson, 2008); (Okay-Somerville & Scholorias, 2013); (Ritter & Ankner, 2002); (Schoekkaert, et al., 2009); (Sengupta, et al., 2009); (Weinkopf, 2009).
Job Security	(Clark, 2001); (Clark, 2005); (Foley & Schwartz, 2003); (Jencks, et al., 1988); (Kalleberg & Vaissy, 2005); (Munoz de Bustillo & Fernandez-Macias, 2005); (McPhail & Fisher, 2008); (Okay-Somerville & Scholorias, 2013); (Sengupta, et al., 2009); (Grote & Guest, 2017).
Promotion Opportunities	(Clark, 2001); (Clark, 2005); (Kalleberg & Vaissy, 2005); (Kelliher & Anderson, 2008); (Mcgovern, et al., 2004); (McPhail & Fisher, 2008); (Ritter & Ankner, 2002).

Hours Worked	(Clark, 2001); (Clark, 2005); (Jencks, et al., 1988); (Ritter & Ankner, 2002).
Benefit	(Jencks, et al., 1988); (Kalleberg & Vaissy, 2005); (Ritter & Ankner, 2002).
Training	(Barling, et al., 2003); (Jencks, et al., 1988); (McPhail & Fisher, 2008).
Skills	(Jencks, et al., 1988); (Okay-Somerville & Scholorias, 2013); (Wilson, et al., 2008).
Work Pressure	(Jencks, et al., 1988); (Schoekkaert, et al., 2009); (Sengupta, et al., 2009).
Task Variety	(Barling, et al., 2003); (Schoekkaert, et al., 2009).
Teamwork	(Munoz de Bustillo & Fernandez-Macias, 2005); (Sengupta, et al., 2009); (Grote & Guest, 2017).
Safe and Healthy Environment	(Clark, 2005); (Grote & Guest, 2017).
Work Itself	(Clark, 2001); (Clark, 2005).
Skill Upgrading	(Ritter & Ankner, 2002); (Wilson, et al., 2008); (Grote & Guest, 2017).
Relations with Management	(Clark, 2001); (Grote & Guest, 2017).
Helping Other People	(Clark, 2005).
Useful to Society	(Clark, 2005); (Grote & Guest, 2017).
Work Stimulation	(Dupre & Day, 2007).
Work Clarity	(Dupre & Day, 2007).
Work-life Balance	(Drobnic & Gullen, 2011); (Kelliher & Anderson, 2008); (Grote & Guest, 2017).
Gets Dirty at Work	(Jencks, et al., 1988).
Physically Demanding Work	(Schoekkaert, et al., 2009).
Flexible working	(Grote & Guest, 2017).
Individual Proactivity	(Grote & Guest, 2017).
Job Quality Dimensions (Aggregated Job Characteristics)	**Authors**
Material Rewards (*pay, job security, promotion opportunities*)	(Handel, 2005).

Intrinsic Rewards (*interesting job. Job autonomy*) Working Conditions (*stress, workload, physical effort, danger*) Interpersonal Relations (*management-employee relations, co-worker relations*)	
Nature of Work (*integration, trust and identification, social relations, health and safety issues)* Job Prospects (*personnel development, job security, job duration*) Compensation and Benefit (*pay differentials, fringe benefits, additional rewards*)	(Mitlacher, 2008).
Employment Relations and Protection (*employment opportunities, employment relations, career opportunities, job protection, pay*) Time and Work Autonomy (*work intensity, power and autonomy, work-life balance, work relations*) Skills and Careers (*skills, job prospects*)	(Rubery & Grimshaw, 2001).

Table A.1 – Job Quality Characteristics and Dimensions: A Summary of The Relevant Literature (adapted from Buccuzzo & Gianecchini, 2015)

Appendix A2 – Interview Guide

- Tell me a bit about your work history and how you ended up in this line of work (*probe: prior education, prior career history, periods of unemployment, employment opportunities in local area, caring commitments and life events*).

- Did you try to find other types of work before you began working for X (if no, why not. If yes, what other types of job did you apply for and what are the reasons you decided to work for X). *Alternatively, if participant has another job probe a little more about what this is and how they first heard about the platform and what attracted them to gig work.*

- What's it like doing this type of work? How does it compare to jobs you have had before?

- Why are you still doing this kind of work now?

- Tell me a bit more about your current role and what an average day or week might be like for you. Is this fairly consistent or can it be variable? Is this an issue for you?

- What aspects of gig work do you enjoy the most and what are the main advantages you see to working this way in comparison to other forms of work?

- Do you think there are any disadvantages to working this way? Have you faced any challenges/had any issues since you began working this way?

- Would you recommend working in the gig economy to a friend? How would you feel about your children working in the gig economy?

- Do you see yourself continuing to use this platform in the future? What makes you say this? (probe future aspirations).

- if you don't already do this full time would you consider leaving your other employment to do this full time? What makes you say this?

Probing questions will be used in order to explore the individual's experiences of the following job aspects as well as how important they are to the individual:

- ***Money/wages*** *(How do you feel about the pay you receive for this work? How do you feel about the payment system? Are you able to save regularly? Are you saving for retirement? How important would you say wages/money is in your evaluation of a job as good or bad?)*
- ***The job content*** *(e.g. what type of work do you do through the online platform(s). Do you enjoy this type of work? What do you enjoy/not like about it?)*
- ***Autonomy or control*** *(would you say you had freedom/autonomy to do your work the way you want to? How do you feel about this?)*
- ***Workload/workplace demands*** *(would you describe your job as demanding? What makes you say this? How would you describe the pace of work? How do you balance work with other commitments?)*
- ***Job security*** *(do you feel confident in your ability to continue to find work this way? Do you perceive any potential difficulties which could arise in relation to finding work this way? How important is it you whether you have contractual job security?)*
- ***Training*** *(what training (formal or on the job) have you had at X? How do you feel about this? What skills would you say are needed to do this sort of work? Can you think of any occasions where you have learned a new skill during your time working for X? Do you think the skills learned/used at X will be transferable to other jobs? Can you provide an example?)*
- ***Opportunities for career progression*** *(Would you say there were many opportunities for carer progression at X? How do you feel about this/does this matter to you/will this influence your decision to do this work full time/long term?)*
- ***Working hours*** *– (How many hours would you say you work a week through the platform? (if participants have another job prove the number of working hours this is). How consistent is this/has this changed over time? Would you like to work any more or less hours? What sort of patterns of hours do you work? How does this impact your life outside of work?)*
- ***Physical working conditions and work-related risks*** *(How would you describe your working conditions? Do you feel safe at work? What makes you say this? Are there any*

work-related risks which you have been or are aware of? What steps are taken by the platform in order to keep platform users safe?)

- ***Social working environment*** *(Tell me about your relationships at work with your co-workers/employer? How often do you meet or communicate with a co-worker or manager? How do you communicate with others who use the platform/with the employer? How do you feel about this?)*
- ***Employee participation*** *(How often are you asked for your input as to how the platform works or in relation to the terms and conditions of your relationship with the platform? Do you feel that your opinions are listened to? How do you feel about this?*
- *Are you part of a Union? If yes – do you feel this provides a benefit/have you benefited from their support? If no, why not? Have you been part of any strike or collective action whilst working with X? Are there any forums or groups that you are part of where people from the platform discuss issues/offer each other support? Probe into use of these forums if applicable.*
- ***Access to employment benefits*** *(What is your employment status/Do you receive holiday pay, sick pay, minimum wage? How do you feel about this? What do you do if you are unable to work? What would you do if the platform terminated your contract for a reason you felt was unfair?)*

- Tell me about how the application works and what you use it for (*probe any issues which have arisen, perception of its usability, suggestion for improvements, misbehaviour*)

- Do you feel there are any benefits/costs from working through an app in this way?

- *Final questions….*

- Are there any other things which we haven't discussed today which have influenced how you feel about your current job working for X?

Appendix A3 – Example Coding Framework

Participation	Opportunities for individual voice	Surveys
		Contact with platform
	Opportunities for collective voice	Union representation
		Informal collectivism
Opportunity	Training	Formal
		On the job
	Progression	Gaining experience
		Networking
		Entrepreneurship
		Skill development
Security	Formal job security	Contractual status
	Perceived security	Accessibility
		Employability
Wages	Wage levels	Hidden costs
		Fluctuations
	Access to benefits	Worker
		Self-employed
Job Content	Psychological aspects	Repetitive
		Enjoyment
	Pace of Work and Workload	Physical demands
		Mental demands
		Less stress
Autonomy	Control	Flexible scheduling
		Absence of supervision
	Restrictions on autonomy	Digital algorithms
Social work environment	Support from platform	Problem solving

		Employment support
		Mistrust
	Support from co-workers	Online platforms
		Quality of workforce
Safety at work	Technology	Customer profiles
		Tracking technology
		No need to carry cash
	Work-related risk	Health and safety management
Working hours	Total number	Excessive
		Inconsistent
	Distribution	Highly variable
		Flexible

Table A3.1 – Coding Template: Key Job Quality Dimensions

External factors	Individual factors	Prior work experience
		Individual preference
		Dependence upon income from gig economy as primary/supplementary source
		Dependence upon gig work on short term v long term basis
	Contextual factors	Availability of labour market alternatives
		Employment regime (trade-off between security and flexibility)

Technology	Impact on autonomy and control
	Impact on flexible scheduling
	Work-life balance
	Transparency
	Efficiency
	Fairness
	Human contact

Table A3.2 – Coding Template: Individual and Contextual Factors Influencing Job Quality

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